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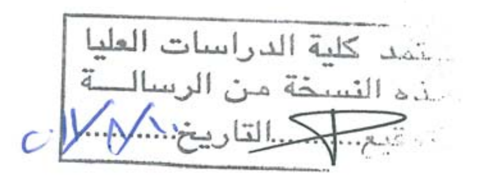
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عنوان الرسالة:

Models of the Fantastic in the Novels of Ursula Le Guin *A Wizard of Earthsea*, John Barth *Chimera*, Ibrahim al-Koni *Gold Dust*, and Susan Power *The Grass Dancer*

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MODELS OF THE FANTASTIC IN THE NOVELS OF URSULA LE GUIN *A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA*, JOHN BARTH *CHIMERA*, IBRAHIM AL-KONI *GOLD DUST*, AND SUSAN POWER *THE GRASS DANCER*

By

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Supervisor

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This Thesis was Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature

Faculty of Graduate Studies

The University of Jordan

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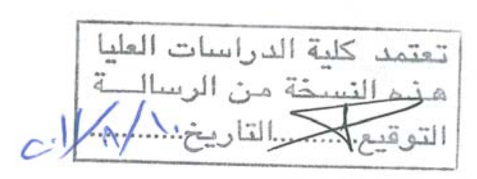
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COMMITTEE DECISION

This Thesis (Models of the Fantastic in the Novels of Ursula Le Guin *A Wizard of Earthsea*, John Barth *Chimera*, Ibrahim al-Koni *Gold Dust*, and Susan Power *The Grass Dancer*) was Successfully Defended and Approved on 28th of July, 2011.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, sisters, and brother for always believing in me

To my friends for coloring my world with their beautiful spirits

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes how the fantastic as a literary form and a mode of expression presents variable approaches to reality in four different novels. It shows how the fantastic addresses the relationship between reality and fantasy through three of its models: fairytale, myth, dreams and visions. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Le Guin creates a parallel world that builds on magical and realistic features. What supports this world is a constructive use of language that produces new signifiers and supports the novel's magical speech. *Earthsea* also breaks down traditional binary opposites like good and evil to present a world whose balance relies on the juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory values.

In *Gold Dust*, the hero myth functions on a psychological level as it affects the protagonist's unconscious perception of his world, the Tuareg desert. What allows this is the existence of this myth as archetypal images in a part of the psyche called "the collective unconscious." The hero myth affects the protagonist and projects itself on his world, making him

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see himself as a larger-than-life figure and his life's events as part of his heroic quest. In *Chimera*, the mythic situation is reversed. As a metafictional text, the novel presents a number of fictional characters *consciously* re-constructing their old myths. The novel builds on narrative frames that alternate between the mimetic and the marvelous. This serves an aesthetic level as it shows how the fictional world is a construct formed by artistic techniques and how this can also apply to reality and the way it is structured.

The Grass Dancer presents a Native American society whose definition of reality integrates supernatural aspects, namely those whose context is dreams and visions. The novel's depiction of the supernatural as co-existing with the natural suggests that this social group's approach to reality sees the "marvelous" and supernatural as possible.

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Introduction
The Fantastic in Postmodern Literature

Postmodern literature encompasses views on reality within new narrative forms that allow various interpretations. Among these forms is the fantastic that has its roots in the earliest forms of myth, romance, and fairy tales, and functions both as a technique and a mode of expression. Nowadays, it manifests itself in a variety of genres like high fantasy, science fiction, magical realism, and metafiction.

Whether in oral or written literary traditions, storytellers have employed the fantastic as they combined the supernatural with the natural. Nevertheless, realistic approaches to literature helped perpetuate a negative view of the fantastic, taking it for a mere style devoid of all sense. In her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), Jackson affirms that critics have built their criticism of the fantastic on the category of the real. To these critics, the fantastic "introduces areas which can be conceptualized only by negative terms according to the nineteenth century realism;" thus, we have words like "the im-possible, the un-real, the nameless, formless, shapeless, unknown, [and] in-visible" (26).

Kathryn Hume examines this literary phenomenon. She suggests that critics have expected a strict correlation between art and reality due to the influence of Plato (427 BC-347 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) and their view on the relation between the two categories. Though each of these two philosophers had his own understanding of the role of art, both have treated it as a reflection of reality. According to Hume, this sort of understanding has cast its shadow on literary criticism for a long time (5). As a result, the fantastic did not start gaining recognition until the second half of the twentieth century with the advent of new philosophical perceptions of reality. In this respect, Sanford Schwartz explains that modern writers were invariably preoccupied with the philosophical debates on

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whether the world exists separate from the way our minds perceive it, and how much we know about it.

Schwartz suggests that William James (1842-1910) devised the philosophy of “immediate experience,” and together with Henri Bergson (1859-1941) developed a new theory of knowledge by announcing a major inversion of Platonism in Western philosophy. What supported this change was a general attitude of skepticism towards scientific truth in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, well before Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and quantum mechanics undermined the foundations of classical physics. The result was that scientists and philosophers began doubting the existence of fixed correspondences between scientific formulations and the external world. Like James, modern philosophers denied that our knowledge reflects the essential structure of the external world. His philosophy of “immediate experience” regards reality a subjective matter that lies in the immediate flux of sensory appearances and not in the rational one beyond it. James advocated a multiplicity of truths instead of an absolute one since he contended that “truth” is always generated in context rather than existing paradigmatically (Schwartz, 8; 17). According to Tony Sharp, in James’ view, most human knowledge is based on an interaction, usually unnoticed, of a desiring mind and external reality. The world we discover is the world for which we were looking, and to that degree “created” (Sharp, 28).

The shift from ‘Truth’ to perception and from mimesis to avant-gardism affected the literary practice immensely. Modernist and postmodernist writers alike have played with meaning and experimented on form. They wrote narratives that reflect individual cases of human experience rather than impose a fixed meaning on the reader. Others wrote fantastic narratives that depict parallel worlds, magic, aliens, robots, myths, supernatural creatures and other elements. Those writers used the fantastic in what implies their own perspectives

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on reality, 'truth,' and the extents of human imagination and literary creativity. In this literature, language becomes the device to construct, deconstruct, or reconstruct meaning, for now "Words have gained an autonomy which things have lost" (Todorov, 168).

Another factor that changed the status of the fantastic pertains to the works of such leading theorists as Tzvetan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson. Along with others, these two laid the foundations of a theory of the genre that ultimately led to a more involved engagement with the fantastic as a literary form worthy of investigation. Nevertheless, these theorists had to deal with the vague relationship between fantasy and reality. To solve the matter, they did not attempt to resolve this "vagueness," but they rather proposed different approaches to it.

Todorov approached the fantastic from a structural perspective. He understood it as a literary form that resides between the "marvelous" and the '"uncanny." The literary effect of this form is that it puts the reader, and/or the character, in a state of "hesitation" as they attempt to explain the story's events. Todorov describes this matter as follows:

> The fantastic requires the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between natural and supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character . . . [The hesitation] becomes one of the themes of the work . . . Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations. These three requirements do not have an equal value. The first and the third actually constitute the genre; the second may not be fulfilled. (*Ibid*., 33)

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For Todorov, the state of hesitation the text places on the reader demands a resolution. He or she should decide on whether the story's event pertains to the uncanny, marvelous, or fantastic. Thus,

> At the story's end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the works belong to another genre; the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous. (Todorov, 41)

In this sense, an evaluation of the fantastic depends on the reader who, if unable to decide whether the literary event is uncanny or marvelous, will find himself or herself in the realm of the fantastic. Sometimes, textual evidence leaves no room for hesitation and resolves the confusion; otherwise, the reader remains the judge of the matter.

As for Jackson, her book expands on Todorov's poetics as she examines the politics of the fantastic. She works from the perspective that the fantastic is placed between "the marvelous" and the "mimetic" (Jackson, 32). In this respect, the attributes of the fantastic include both the marvelous (the world of fairy story, romance, magic, supernaturalism, etc.) and the mimetic (features of external reality). Accordingly,

> [fantastic narratives] assert that what they are telling is real – relying upon all the conventions of realistic fiction to do so – and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what – within those terms – is manifestly unreal . . . [They reside] between the marvelous and the mimetic, borrowing the extravagance of one and the ordinariness of the other. (*Ibid*., 34-5)

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Jackson's interpretation of the fantastic is based on the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. She postulates its use as an expression of desire, whether it is the 'telling' of desire or the 'expelling' of it. These desires are the author's and/or the reader's, and they are evoked by their "social context[s]" (Jackson, 3). In this respect, the fantastic "traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" (*Ibid.*, 4). The result of Jackson's endeavor is a view of the fantastic as a literary form and a mode of expression characterized by

> an inability . . . to present definitive versions of 'truth' or 'reality' . . . the modern fantastic [is] a literature which draws attention to its own practice as a linguistic system. Structured upon contradiction and ambivalence, the fantastic traces that which cannot be said, that which evades articulation or that which is represented as 'untrue' and 'unreal.' By offering a problematic re-presentation of an empirically 'real' world, the fantastic raises questions of the nature of the real and unreal, foregrounding the relation between them as its central concern. It is in this sense that Todorov refers to fantasy as the most 'literary' of all literary forms . . . for it makes explicit the problems of establishing 'reality' and 'meaning' through the literary text. (*Ibid.*, 37)

Through a process of subversion, the fantastic disrupts the "'rules' of artistic representation and literature's reproduction of the 'real'" (*Ibid.*, 14). This disruption is merely an attempt to bring into view aspects of our world and thought that are usually kept in the dark and place them on equal footing with what is commonly established as "real." The result is a different approach to reality and a creative piece of writing that questions the way we

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define the world and the human experience. Though Jackson sets "subversion" as the means by which the fantastic does this, Lance Olsen suggests that its other functions are

> to surprise, to question, to put into doubt, to create anxiety, to make active. to make uncomfortable, to disgust, to repel, to rebel, to subvert, to pervert, to make ambiguous, to make discontinuous, to deform. It is a mode whose premise is a will to deconstruct. (291)

In addition to these theorists, postmodern writers of the fantastic contributed to the definition of the genre by defending their use of this mode of expression. They use the fantastic as a device to present their own conception of the world and its features. They employ it in what serves their sense of the human and the non-human worlds. For this reason, they do not like their works to be associated with escapism or allegory. Their fantastic is skillfully weaved into the story's body in what enriches the text and carries it to higher levels of meaning.

A writer and critic of fantasy, J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) writes that "fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and in our own derivative mode because we are made" (55). In this sense, the fantastic stands as proof of the human imagination and its tendency to create something of its own. Tolkien's fantastic builds on the creation of worlds that exist by their own rules. Though these rules are also constructs, they are essential to the authenticity of the text. The reader may believe the fantastic only because it is well-structured and made believable regardless of how its world relates to the "real" one.

These definitions and views help prove that the fantastic is a multi-headed monster whose strength comes from its unstable nature. It does not manifest a uniformity but a deformity, not something definite but indefinite, not one aspect but many. For this reason, the theorists of the fantastic differ in the way they deal with it. Some examine the use of the

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fantastic in certain literary works and devise a theory accordingly. Others apply a preset definition on corresponding works. To offer a different approach, Hume gives a general definition that encompasses as many works as possible. She states that the fantastic is "*any departure from consensus reality*, an impulse native to literature . . . it includes transgressions of what one generally takes to be physical facts such as human immortality [and] travel faster than light" (21). By "consensus reality," Hume means "the reality we depend on for everyday action" (*Ibid*., xi). In other words, it is the part of reality we understand through "physical facts." However, such a definition is flexible since the concept of "consensus reality" may vary from one cultural and temporal context to another. In this sense, the fantastic is best viewed as an eclectic form /mode that functions on variable levels of meaning: the ontological, psychological, aesthetic, and cultural.

The scholarship on the field has divided the fantastic into a number of generic groups. For critics, Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968) belongs to High Fantasy, John Barth's (b. 1930) *Chimera* (1972) is a metafictional novel, whereas the third category of magical realism manifests itself in Ibrahim al-Koni's (b. 1948) *Gold Dust* (1990), and Susan Power's (b. 1961) *The Grass Dancer* (1994). However, the study breaks generic restrictions as it places these seemingly different works under the banner of the fantastic, filling the gaps in their studies in that matter.

This study is both theoretical and analytical because the interpretation of the four novels builds on the poetics of the fantastic as a form. It also recognizes the fantastic as a mode that heightens the complex relationship between fantasy and reality. To achieve its purposes, the study examines how these novels exhibit three models of the fantastic: the fairytale-based, the myth-based, and the dream and vision-based.

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As a novel of high fantasy, *A Wizard of Earthsea* represents the fairytale-based fantastic. Le Guin creates an archipelago in an ocean world of the name "Earthsea." In this kingdom, the true names of people and objects are sacred. Wizards and witches pursue the knowledge of these names, "For magic consists in this, the true naming of a thing" (*Earthsea*, 46), and it is this knowledge that helps control and conquer the object or the person. The novel's hero, Ged, is a wizard-in-the-making, who foolishly lets loose what he deems to be a nameless shadow. It is an object of pure evil, and it attempts to kill Ged on many occasions. Eventually, Ged decides that he should confront his fears by chasing and vanquishing the shadow on his own. In their final encounter, he finds out that it bears his own true name and conquers it. Generally speaking, the novel exhibits the fantastic that relies on fairytale features. Its world vibrates with magical creatures, wizards and witches, people in the forms of animals, and mystical darkness.

Upon hearing the word 'fairytale,' many readers might recall a long-standing heritage of folktales and stories about dragons, wizards, and enchanted castles. Such a stereotypical consideration of fairytales is not inaccurate, for many of these exhibit such features. According to John Ruskin, the value of these tales goes beyond their style and entertaining effect,

> For every fairy tale worth recording at all is the remnant of a tradition possessing true historical value;—historical, at least, in so far as it has naturally arisen out of the mind of a people under special circumstances, and risen not without meaning, nor removed altogether from their sphere of religious faith. It sustains afterwards natural changes from the sincere action of the fear or fancy of successive generations; it takes new color from their manner of life, and new form from their changing moral tempers. (61-2)

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The fairytale has had its place in literary history since its early beginnings. Its popularity among writers from different eras comes from its value as a form, for it allows them to create new worlds and creatures which work by their own laws.

The worlds of fairytales are usually structured around a journey through which the hero proves his worthiness and restores peace to himself and to his world. In his discussion of "Romance," Northrop Frye calls this journey a "quest" and he characterizes it as follows:

> The successful quest . . . has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero. We may call these three stages respectively, using Greek terms, the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict. (187)

This journey continues to be an important feature in the postmodern fairytale-based fantastic. The high fantasies of C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), Tolkien, Le Guin, and J.K. Rowling (b. 1965) are all cases in point.

The postmodern remodeling of older literary forms is not a new matter, but what is worthy of interest, however, is why these postmodern writers rely on such a form and not any other. In the case of *Earthsea*, the fairytale-based fantastic enters the text as a form and as an expression of authorial vision. A critic of Le Guin, Elizabeth Cummins (1990) says:

> Fantasy . . . like myth and dream, assumes the existence of a world of being beyond or underneath perceived, empirical reality; and it reproduces that other world by means of symbol and literary archetype. Wizards, shadows, dragons . . . are some of

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> the symbols and archetypes that reverberate with ethical, emotional, and aesthetic meaning in Le Guin's fantasy trilogy [i.e. the Earthsea cycle]. (23)

Le Guin's interests in anthropology, psychology, Taoism, sociology, utopian thought and feminism show in her works. For this reason, critics of *A Wizard of Earthsea* approach the novel from various perspectives. For instance, W.A. Senior followed an anthropological approach as he examined the novel's cultural constructs and portrayal of social relations. Other critics like Edgar Bailey use psychoanalysis and examine Ged's journey from Freudian and Jungian viewpoints. To these critics, this journey revolves around Ged's psychological growth, and so the world of Earthsea becomes a reflection of his psyche that disrupts before reaching a balance. Their major interest is the shadow that, in Jungian terminology, stands for the repressed self or the inner "evil" of the self. As a reader of Jung herself, Le Guin asserts such a connection as she states that the shadow stands for "all we don't want to, can't, admit into our conscious self, all the qualities and tendencies within us which have been repressed, denied, or not used" (Le Guin, 1980, 64).

Other than single approaches, some critics employ more than one framework in their examination of *Earthsea*. For instance, Warren Rochelle uses feminism, Jung's theory of archetypes, and utopian thoughts in his work *Communities of the Heart: the Rhetoric of Myth in the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin* (2001). His study builds on the argument that "the Earthsea quest for harmony may be seen as a poetic idea and a metaphor for our present condition . . . as an exploration of an element of the new story for humanity we desperately need to spell out" (143). He establishes Earthsea as a utopian construct that offers a solution to our current problems. On the other hand, Cummins in her book *Understanding Ursula K. Le Guin* (1990) approaches the novel's use of archetypes, its anthropological

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depiction of Earthsea as a balanced world, and the psychological journey of the hero. She also builds on the interrelatedness between theme, character, world, and quest.

All in all, these critics focus their studies either on Ged's "quest," or the anthropological features of its world, or the metaphorical relation between these two. However, this study approaches the novel's world from a deconstructive approach that builds on poststructuralist theory, namely that of "deconstruction." It views Earthsea as a text that deconstructs or subverts aspects of reality, specifically the traditional way of setting values in a hierarchy of binary opposites. This approach heightens the text's world and its nature as one that is different from yet not separate from ours, and so it emphasizes the delicate relationship the text's world has with the one outside it.

In his theories, Jacques Derrida takes a stance against the empirical Western philosophy and its hierarchy of binary opposites where one term is set as superior to the other. Instead, he promotes "free play, nihilistic canceling out of opposites, [and the] abolition of hierarchies" (Gasché, 3). This he does by prioritizing the signifiers over their signifieds, and heightening their role as constructors of presence and meaning whether or not the object of signification is present. In this sense, language as a regenerating source of signifiers has the power to create new beings and worlds that are absent or even non-existent in ours. John D. Caputo asserts this notion by comparing signifiers to magical charms when he states that

> Signifiers work like magic. They are powerful forces which produce extraordinary effects—and this is by uttering a formula. They have the power to traffic with things which are not present, to produce results with signs. For it is the very function of the sign, its structural necessity, to be able to operate in the absence of its object . . .

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> [“Deconstruction”] liberates the power of world-making, the magic of creation. (106-11)

In her writings, Le Guin emphasizes this aspect of language. To her, the fantastic creates a world that is

> a construct built in a void . . . [It is] a world where no voice has ever spoken before; where the act of speech is the act of creation. The only voice that speaks there is the creator’s voice. And every word counts. (1980, 95)

In *Earthsea*, language satisfies its “very function” as it signifies the objects of its world. In addition, the novel breaks down common binary opposites like evil/good, man/shadow, self/ other, and fantasy/ reality. In this sense, *Earthsea* stands for a new discourse in which language constructs a new world by subverting aspects of ours and combining the marvelous with the mimetic.

Barth’s *Chimera* is a metafictional text. It exhibits features of the myth-based fantastic. The novel consists of three parts entitled “Dunyazadiad,” “Perseid,” and “Bellerophoniad.” Its action takes place between Barth, the twentieth century figure, and the heroes of old myths and folktales.

The novel encompasses the tales of Scheherazade of *The Thousand and One Nights* in its first part “Dunyazadiad.” The title refers to Scheherazade’s younger sister Dunyazade, and illuminates the two sisters’ conflict with King Shahryar and his brother Shah Zaman who presumably kill women to avenge for themselves their wives’ infidelity. Barth, as a “Genie” from the future, helps them by suggesting they resort to storytelling. The characters eventually discover that “*the key to the treasure is the treasure*” (*Chimera*, 11). In other words, it is the act of storytelling that takes precedence over the actual story. Such

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a statement sets the tone for the rest of the novel as it shifts from the realm of folktale to that of Greek myth.

In "Perseid," Barth uses the myth of Perseus, the slayer of Medusa, who struggles with an internal conflict. The dullness of his middle years pushes him to revive his heroic olden days. In the chapter titled "Bellerophoniad," Barth uses the myth of Bellerophon, who tamed the winged horse Pegasus. Eventually, the myth turns into a chaos of interrelated myths and figures and ends with the prominence of the mythic pattern over the mythic hero and his quest.

In his essay "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967), Barth defines metafiction as "novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author" (168). His untraditional literary approach springs from his deep conviction that literature has reached its limitations and exhausted itself. "By 'exhaustion,'" Barth does not mean "the subject of physical, moral, or intellectual decadence" but rather "the used-upness of certain forms or the felt exhaustion of certain possibilities—by no means necessarily a cause for despair" (*Ibid.*,162).

To solve this issue, Barth employs a metafictional narrative that functions as an alternative for exhausted literary forms, as a means to stress the limitations of literary creativity, and as a way to show how the admittance of this problem literarily is its solution. The final function of metafiction fulfills a postmodern condition, and it is probably the reason why Barth's essay presents itself as one of the pillars of postmodernism. Whilst modernists pursued solutions for literary limitations and eventually found none, postmodernists have done the opposite. They augmented their problems and settled for that as a solution. Like the fictional Barth, they found that "the key to the treasure is the treasure." The key to solve problems of fiction is to write about them.

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The few critics of *Chimera* examined Barth's application of his theory in it. For this reason, most of them approached it in terms of technique. In "John Barth's *Chimera*: a Creative Response to the Literature of Exhaustion" (1976), Jerry Powell proposes a thematic approach by discussing the novel's content as an extension of its metafictional form. This he does by making reference to Barth's essay and establishing that the novel is about exhausted possibilities. This theme does not only function on the literary level, but it becomes a metaphor "for many of the daily problems people face throughout life" (60).

Though Powell approaches the novel thematically, his study remains within the circle of metafiction. In addition, it does not directly address the novel's utilization and creation of myth. John B. Vickery in his study "The Functions of Myth in John Barth's *Chimera*" (1992) discusses myth and examines Barth's mythical heroes. This he does to emphasize Barth's creative narrativity. As Barth tells and retells stories, and uses characters fluidly, he creates a spiral narrative where he functions as character and author.

Critics regard *Chimera* as a metafictional text that exhibits an interrelatedness of actions and a play on words. Its form is spiral and its imagery is recurrent. Its author/character addresses old myths and stories by creating new ones. For these critics, all these features are demanded and restrained solely by the metafictional framework. However, this study heightens the text's metafictional and mythopoeic features as fantastic ones.

Aside from being fiction about fiction and myth about myth-making, *Chimera* is a fantastic text where issues of fantasy, reality and realism are addressed. Such an opinion emerges from a similarity of function between fantasy and metafiction. This is evident in Patricia Waugh's view of metafiction as an "artifact" that asks "questions about the relationship between fiction and reality . . . [as] to explore the relationship between the

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world *of* fiction and the world *outside* the fiction" (2; 3). The study approaches *Chimera*'s myth-based fantastic and how it supports the text's metafictional ends.

Where al-Koni is concerned, his novel *Gold Dust* relies on archetypal images derived from the Tuareg myths of the Sahara. The novel's hero, Ukhayyad and his camel share a spiritual connection. They accompany one another in daily wanderings and life-threatening adventures. Such a relationship alienates Ukhayyad from his society and makes him subject to different shapes of evil. The novel's world is a vivid spectrum of the fantastic that includes mythical figures, jinn, pagan gods, magical plants and witchcraft. In its use of the fantastic, *Gold Dust* builds on features of the Tuareg mythology to illuminate that aspect of the Tuareg culture and show how it affects the individual in what leads to inner and external conflicts.

The existing scholarship on the novel focuses on its desert setting. In his book *Tajaliyyāt al-Wāqi´ wal'- Ustūra fī al-Natāj al-Riwā'i li Ibrāhīm al-Koni* [Manifestations of Reality and Myth in the Novels of Ibrahim al-Koni] (2002), ´Awnī al-Fa´ūrī associates critical evaluations of al-Koni's work to "Desert Literature" and the criticism about it. He also makes reference to Todorov's study as he outlines the elements of the marvelous and mimetic in al-Koni's work.

Though al-Fa´ūrī admits the role of the fantastic in *Gold Dust*, he sets it as an aspect of desert life. He also builds on anthropology and Freudian psychology in his understanding of this world and its culture. In contrast, this study approaches the hero of the novel, his psyche, and his relation to his world. It discusses Ukhayyad's perception of his world as it employs Carl Jung's theories on the psyche and its archetypes.

Jung divides the psyche into consciousness and the unconscious. He highlights the role of what he calls "the "collective unconscious" and its content of archetypes. Through

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an unconscious process, “archetypes” as content-free templates fill with “archetypal images” from cultural and social sources. These affect the individual’s thoughts and actions. The “personal unconscious” also plays a part in shaping the self and controlling the individual’s mannerism. Through a process Jung calls “individuation,” the personal and the collective unconscious reconcile with the consciousness. Their presence becomes admitted and permitted, and so the self reaches a balance.

Archetypal images originate from cultural aspects derived from religion and mythology. They affect and are affected by the individual’s view of reality and for that relate to aspects of fantasy. In *C.G. Jung and Literary Theory: the Challenge from Fiction*, Susan Rowland states that

> Given the importance Jung assigns to the unconscious and its structuring powers, archetypes, it is unsurprising to discover that his psyche is distinctively creative. The psyche frames and organizes the perception of reality, giving the term ‘fantasy’ a significant twist. Fantasy [becomes] not rigidly separable from the ordinary comprehension of reality. (10)

As this study discusses the novel’s archetypal images that build on the Tuareg myths and beliefs, it expands on the relationship between the psyche, reality, and fantasy. By employing a Jungian reading of the text, it shows how Ukhayyad is highly affected by the hero myth and its archetypes, and so the reader sees how this character understands reality through them.

Power’s *The Grass Dancer* tells the story of Harley Wind Soldier, a young Dakota Indian, and several generations of his ancestors. Power predominately uses vision and dream as a fantastic model of representation. The novel includes nonhuman as well as human characters. The spirit world is an important part of all the stories, and ghosts and

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magic are part of the characters' everyday lives. The novel's Native American community puts these fantastic features under the banner of belief and spirituality. In this sense, the novel depicts how the fantastic functions when it is a part of a social group's reality.

Unfortunately, the novel has not received enough critical attention. Critics of the novel do not investigate Power's use of the fantastic in the cultural context of Native American beliefs, particularly their belief in the truth of dreams, visions, and spirits. Many readers of Native-American works that rely on fantastic features establish them as works of magical realism. Such a term labels these works' supernatural features as 'unreal' and 'imaginary' rather than set them as valid aspects of the Native American life. For this reason, and in the context of *The Grass Dancer*, the examination of this novel relies on the theory of social constructionism: the study of the conception of reality and its constituents by a social group.

In her article "'I Am Not a Fairy Tale': Contextualizing Sioux Spirituality and Story Traditions in Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer*" (2009), Vanessa Diana discusses the cultural relation between belief and supernatural wonder. Nevertheless, she does not make reference to the poetics of the fantastic as they manifest themselves in the novel. A recent theory in sociology, social constructionism asserts the ability of fiction to create a vivid society with its features. In this sense, the world of the text is not detached from the world outside it as the novel employs aspects of a group's tradition, religion, and history. To a large extent, this sociological concept comes to show that what Power creates (rather recreates) in her novel is a tribal homogeneous culture where the fantastic represents an actual national society and its spiritual values.

The choice of four relatively different works does not only prove the eclectic nature of the fantastic, but it also contributes to recent comparative studies as it examines its use in

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three national literatures: Arabic, American, and Native-American. This asserts the ability of the fantastic to offer a variety of meanings in different contexts.

This thesis consists of three chapters, each of which discusses one fantastic model. The first chapter is concerned with the fairytale-based fantastic, the second with the myth-based fantastic, and the final with the dream and vision-based fantastic. Each chapter examines the poetics and politics of the specified fantastic model as they manifest themselves in the given texts.

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Chapter One
The Fairytale-based Fantastic: Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*

Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* revolves around Ged’s quest to achieve the mastery of magic and understand the mystery of the self. The events take place in an archipelago by the name Earthsea at an unspecified point in time. As Ged leads a simple life in Ten Alders in the island of Gont, he finds interest in magic. His aunt, the village witch, teaches him simple charms that hardly satisfy his great ambition. In an instance where Ged rescues his village from the vicious Kargs by summoning a mist around his people, he finds himself under the patronage of the great wizard Ogion.

Ogion’s slow and quiet teaching methods drive Ged away from him and to Roke Island, where he attends their famous school for wizards. There, his life passes by undisturbed as he learns about the world he lives in and the power of magic. As he releases an evil shadow in the process of showing off in front of other students, his life changes drastically. This harmful creature forces Ged to leave Roke and wander around the archipelago. It also hurts the people around him, and it attacks him on my occasions in its constant attempt to possess him. Burdened by a sense of responsibility and weary of fear, Ged decides to become the hunter rather than the hunted, and so he starts a “shadow-quest” (Le Guin, *Earthsea*, 158). In every island Ged visits in his pursuit of the shadow, he meets new people who speak different languages and have their own system of values. His quest leads him to the farthest area of Earthsea where he finally meets his rival. Eventually, he discovers the means to conquer the shadow and so restores peace to himself and to his world. Though this event ends the novel, Ged’s adventures continue in the subsequent tales

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of *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971), *The Farthest Shore* (1972), *Tehanu* (1990), and *The Other Wind* (2001).

As a postmodern fairytale, the novel maintains the original definition of "Faerie" as the land of illusions, and/or the inhabitants of that land (Keightley, 8-10). Its traditional features include the unspecified time of events, the natural setting, the quest, the larger-than-life hero, and the presence of supernatural powers and beings. In its action, the novel continuously breaks natural laws as magic becomes the norm by which everything operates. Though Le Guin relies on the fairytale tradition, she adds depth to this type of narrative by creating a multi-dimensional parallel world that is rich with its people and objects.

Generally speaking, writers of high fantasy add depth to the fairytale tradition by employing an ontological perspective. An important aspect of the text becomes a well-constructed fictional world. It may suggest a world separate from or part of ours, and which works by its own laws. It is important to put in mind that this world takes as its source of influence the 'real' world. In this sense, it may seem different on the surface with its supernatural elements. However, its framework and underlying structure highly resemble those through which reality functions. All in all, this fantastic world functions as a new construct that is not only evident of the writers' ability to put the imagination and the will to create hand-in-hand, but it also presents their views on the world and its values. What makes this possible is language. It fulfills its role as the means to structure this new world as it creates new signifiers that support it. Also, this world being related to ours, language supports the writers' deconstructive intention as they subvert or alter aspects of reality in their fictional creation.

Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* exemplifies this postmodern rendering of fairytale. Not only does it build on traditional fairytale features, but it modifies them in what serves a

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postmodern perspective. The text relies heavily on the ability of language to construct a new world and deconstruct or subvert aspects of ours as well. The scholarship on the novel has not focused on its fantastic features as fairytale-based or highlighted the role of language in it. To fill these gaps, this chapter traces the novel's fairytale features of time, space, character, and theme in relation to the postmodern fantastic. Furthermore, it examines the important role language plays as the means to deconstruct aspects of reality in the process of constructing a fictional one.

After opening with the "once upon a time" tone of narration, the novel establishes its three unities of setting, time, and characters as well as the fantastic quest of its protagonist, Ged, nicknamed Sparrowhawk. The narrator starts the story as follows:

> The Island of Gont, a single mountain that lifts its peak a mile above the storm-racked Northeast Sea, is a land famous for wizards. From the towns in its high valleys and the ports on its dark narrow bays many a Gontishman has gone forth to serve the Lords of the Archipelago in their cities as wizard or mage, or, looking for adventure, to wander working magic from isle to isle of all Earthsea. Of these some say the greatest, and surely the greatest voyager, was the man called Sparrowhawk, who in his day became both dragonlord and Archmage. (*Earthsea*, 1)

The narrative of the novel happens at some point in time, yet, as is the case with fairytales, it does not have a specific historical context known to the reader. Nonetheless, the inhabitants of Earthsea deal with the story of Ged as though it is a part of *their* history, told and retold in the archipelago through local folktales and songs like the *Deed of Ged*, for instance.

Using a flashback, the narrator takes the reader back in time, "before his [Ged's] fame, before the songs were made" (*Earthsea*, 1). He traces the life of Ged from his early

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years, all through the quest, up until he redeems himself from the dark shadow. In the process, the novel's narrative oscillates between an "unnaturally quick" and an "unnaturally slow passage of time" (Kotzin, 8). Such a feature is characteristic of traditional fairytales. The novel also disrupts chronology in what sometimes offers an insight into the future, where the following extract is a case in point. The narrator says:

> This was Duny's [Ged's childhood name] first step on the way he was to follow all his life, the way of magery, the way that led him at last to hunt a shadow over land and sea to the lightless coasts of death's kingdom. But in those first steps along the way, it seemed a broad, bright road. (*Ibid*., 5)

In traditional fairytales, time is hard to define, and the tale fluctuates between past and future events. Also, characters cross logical boundaries as they travel in time and space with the use of magical charms. The postmodern fantastic preserves this feature for more than an aesthetic purpose. Disrupted time suggests playfulness and paradox, both of which are themes that make a strong appearance in postmodern works. It also helps subvert the once popular view of time as a linear order that was greatly challenged by modernist and postmodernist writers. And so time in *Earthsea* runs in a circular rather than a linear manner.

In *From Modernism to Postmodernism: Concepts and Strategies of Postmodern American Fiction*, Gerhard Hoffmann explains the role circular time plays in fiction as follows:

> When linearity and history are considered emptied forms, the cosmic order, the circular course and the rhythmical phases of nature . . . become attractive for their potential to include persistence in succession and vice versa, to balance form and force in equilibrium. (326)

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To continue with his quest, Ged must conquer the shadow he has released at the beginning. To guarantee a better future, he has to confront his past. In this sense, time manifests itself as cyclic. Only when Ged conquers the shadow at the end, aspects of time that once ran in a circular manner becomes emblematic of a spherical wholeness. Ged is no longer haunted by the burden of a foolish, past action nor is he consumed by fear, and surely this suggests a more balanced future for him and his world.

As for the setting, Earthsea is an archipelago in a sea world. Thus, the name 'Earthsea' indicates the matter of this world: land and water. In terms of its social order, it consists of variable nations, each of which has its own island, set of physical features, magical powers, spoken language, and traditions. For instance, some of these nations are those that live in the islands of Kargad, Astowell, Bereswek, Hur-at-Hut, and the East Reach. The people of Earthsea share a common history and heritage. They have their own set of proverbs like "*Rules change in the Reaches*" (*Earthsea*, 159) and "*Infinite are the arguments of mages*" (*Ibid*., 160). They even have their own set of constellations and these are "the Sheaf, the Door, the One Who Turns, and the Tree" (*Ibid*., 80).

The social structuring of this world indicates that even though it is fictional, it exhibits a cultural order that, to some extent, resembles ours. However, this world operates by its own laws in what sometimes breaks scientific ones. And so in one occasion, for instance, the narrator describes how "clouds hung dark to north and east and south a mile off all about the island. But over Roke stars were coming out one by one in a clear and quiet sky" (*Ibid*., 32). What replace natural laws are magical ones that remain "unexplained" throughout the narrative. Commenting on this fairytale feature, Tolkien writes: "If there is any satire present in the tale, one thing must not be made fun of, the magic itself. That [element] must . . . be taken seriously" (Tolkien, 39). In Earthsea, magic

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plays an important role, and though it evidently breaks scientific laws of possibility, it is taken as the cultural norm.

The novel's depiction of magic and its role in *Earthsea* does not suggest that it only relies on the marvelous mode. As Jackson suggests, the complexity of the postmodern fantastic is its integration of both the "marvelous" and the "mimetic." Clearly enough, the novel's social and cultural structures is a mimetic aspect. Another one present in the novel is slavery. It is described as "evil traffic." In fact, Le Guin stresses the physical feature of skin-color whenever she describes the inhabitants of an island. Many nations of Earthsea are presented as dark-skinned. Hardly any people are referred to as white or fair-skinned. There are, nonetheless, those from Osskil who are described as "pale-skinned" (*Earthsea*, 103).

Another mimetic feature pertains to the way people in Earthsea view some aspects of their world, and how they evaluate what is 'real' or 'believable' and what is not. On many occasions, reference is made to the way they dismiss some cultural matters as mere objects of myth and legend. When Ged challenges Jasper, his opponent at the school of wizards, that he can summon up the spirit of Princess Elfarran from the realm of the dead, Jasper replies that "She died a thousand years ago, her bones lie afar under the Sea of Ea, and maybe there never was such a woman" (*Ibid*., 60). This also applies to dragons. In Gont, Ged's home-island, dragons have always been "a matter of tales and songs only, things sung of but not seen" (*Ibid*., 77). They even consider their existence a "myth" (*Ibid*., 87), regardless of the fact that dragons live in some parts of the archipelago.

Most of the things that are considered "mythical" in Earthsea are the subject matter of popular songs and folktales that people do not believe in. People in our world have used the same yardstick for defining what is deemed "natural," "ordinary," and "real."

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According to sociologists, this evaluation of reality is characteristic of every society, and evidently enough, the fictional one is no exception since

> All civilizations set rules concerning what is "real" and what is not. What is "true" and what is "false". . . Our perceptions are narrowly channeled through concepts and interpretation. What is commonly thought of as "reality," that which "exists," or simply "is," is a set of concepts, conceptual frames, assumptions, suppositions, rationalizations, justifications, defenses, all generally collectively agreed-upon which guide and channel each individual's perceptions in a specific and distinct direction. The specific rules governing the perception of the universe which man inhabits are more or less arbitrary, a matter of convention. Every society establishes a kind of epistemological methodology. (Goode, 83-4)

In a way, the text draws attention to this stereotypical consideration of reality, and how it sometimes limits the imagination and trivializes metaphysical belief. The novel drawing attention to this matter furthers the readers' "hesitation." They see that the characters themselves find difficulty in comprehending the marvelous, and how some characters are even skeptic of its actuality in this magical world. In other words, the novel's combination of the marvelous, demonstrated through the text's magic and supernatural beings, and the mimetic, presented in the culture of Earthsea and its peoples' perception of its intricacies, supports the text's fantastic form. This work of high fantasy presents a lively space whose features can neither be defined as entirely marvelous nor mimetic. And so the readers find themselves drawn to its familiarity as to its magic.

Other than the novel's time and space, its hero is an important component, and his quest constitutes the action of the novel. Traditionally, the fairytale revolves around its hero, "usually an isolated, virtuous young man or woman who is often a youngest child"

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(Kotzin, 8). Throughout the hero's quest, he "confronts a villain, such as . . . a supernatural figure . . . He usually is victorious over his adversary, [and] achieves comfort and happiness" (*Ibid*., 8). To a large extent, Ged fits the criteria. He is the youngest child in his family and grows up without his mother. In his travels, he confronts two villains, namely the dragon of Pendor and the shadow. Contrary to the fairytale tradition, the hero conquers these villains by outsmarting them rather than slaying them.

Another interesting twist in the traditional fairytale quest manifests itself in the depiction of the shadow that Ged releases from the realm of the dead. It is described as "a shapeless clot of shadow darker than the darkness. . . [a] ripping open of the fabric of the world. . . like a black beast, the size of a young child, though it seemed to swell and shrink; and it had no head or face, only four talon paws with which it gripped and tore" (*Earthsea*, 22; 61). Ged fears the shadow because of its ability to possess human bodies and use them for evil ends. It can turn the man into a "gebbeth," a man without a soul. This shadow feeds on Ged's fear, and for that it grows stronger until Ged decides to confront it and fight it back.

Eventually, the mystery of this shadow unravels itself. Archmage Gensher calls it Ged's shadow of "ignorance" (*Ibid*., 66). It is the innate dark side of Ged that he rejects in himself and cannot admit consciously (Le Guin, 1980, 64). He wins the battle against it only when he recognizes its identity and calls it by his own name, "Ged." The act of naming the shadow and the admittance of its origin asserts the importance of certainty for the self's balance and inner peace. Commenting on this event the narrator says:

> Ged had neither lost nor won but, naming the shadow of his death with his own name, had made himself whole: a man: who, knowing his whole true self, cannot be used or possessed by any power other than himself, and whose life therefore is lived

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> for life's sake and never in the service of ruin, or pain, or hatred, or the dark. (*Earthsea,* 181)

As a postmodern text, one of the traditional themes that *Earthsea* deconstructs is the binary opposition of good and evil, which is a very popular one in traditional Western thought and literary practice. Here, good and evil are neither separate nor placed in a hierarchy were good should prevail over evil. The situation of Ged and the shadow suggests a more complex relationship between these two values. The novel is not one where the good person with his/her larger-than-life characteristics fights the evil person/beast/being. It is about the 'self' fighting its own demons. The winning of the self does not result in the destruction of the shadow, but rather the admittance of its existence. In her essay "The Child and the Shadow," Le Guin questions the way traditional fairytales depict virtuous heroes fighting evil villains. To her, this is a misunderstanding of the relationship between good and evil. She writes:

> What we need to grow up is reality, the wholeness which exceeds human virtue and vice. We need knowledge; we need self-knowledge. We need to see ourselves and the shadows we cast. For we can face our own shadow; we can learn to control it and to be guided by it; so that when we grow into our strength and responsibility as adults in society, we will be less inclined, perhaps, either to give up in despair or to deny what we see, when we must face the evil that is done in the world, and the injustices and grief and suffering that we all must bear, and the final shadow at the end of all. (1980, 70)

Le Guin's way of viewing good and evil explains why she subverts the view of them as opposites. In fact, her approach covers other traditional foils such as the friend and the enemy, the strong and the weak, the civilized and the primitive, the self and the other,

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darkness and light, and so forth. In *Earthsea*, good and evil constitute two aspects of human nature, whereby the hero fights his own demons, 'the other' is part of the 'self,' and shadow surrounds light (*Earthsea*, 23). Furthermore death is not depicted as the end of life. In fact, at one point in the narrative, Ged enters a death-like trance where "he would not speak nor eat nor sleep; he seemed not to hear what was said to him, not to see those who came to see him. There was none . . . to cure what ailed him" (*Ibid.*, 13). The narrator describes death as "unlife" (*Ibid.,* 66), where the boundaries between the living and the dead are unspecified. Wizards can summon dead people with certain songs and charms. In this regard, the realm of death is not separate from that of life, and a good wizard can travel between both. For instance, when Ged attempts to retrieve his friend's child's spirit before it crosses over to "unlife," his spirit reaches a dark hillside that binds the living with the dead. Suddenly, he finds himself in direct confrontation with the shadow which "stood on the side of the living," whereas Ged stood "on the side of the dead" (*Ibid.,* 81).

What the afore-mentioned overview of time, space, character and theme in *Earthsea* suggests is the reliance of this novel on the tradition of fairytales. It also shows some generic variations in terms of the text's multi-dimensional world, the villains the hero fights, and the modification of some traditional themes. Some aspects of this world are created with the aid of the supernatural and magical, and some traditional binary opposites are subverted. In the process of this creation and subversion, Le Guin relies heavily on language and its ability to construct and deconstruct meaning. Not only does language create Earthsea, but it also makes it believable. By creating new signifiers, Le Guin supports her world with places, rituals, creatures, and charms whose names, meanings, and sometimes referents are new constructs. This practice manifests itself in the way everything

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in *Earthsea* has two names, the given name and the true name to which the creature submits completely to its caller. In one instance, the narrator says:

> She threw clear water on the fire till the smoke cleared away, and gave the boy water to drink, and when the air was clear and he could speak again she taught him the true name of the falcon, to which the falcon must come. (*Earthsea*, 2)

In this sense, there are two signifiers for every 'object.' One of them builds on English vocabulary, while the other is invented. The latter takes precedence over the former and it has a higher metaphysical value, for not only does Le Guin create a new language, but she also makes it "truer." This "true" name is a sacred property because

> no one knows a man's true name but himself and his namer. He may choose at length to tell it to his brother, or his wife, or his friend, yet even those few will never use it where any third person may hear it. (*Ibid.,* 69)

Signifiers indicative of people are varied and they accommodate every stage of their lives. The name Ged's mother has given him is Duny, but as he grows up and practices magic, people see him summoning birds all the time and so call him "Sparrowhawk." Later on, Ogion names him "Ged," which becomes his true name. When he tames the dragon of Pendor, the people of Torning name him the Dragon-tamer. In the subsequent tales of the series, Ged acquires even more names.

The knowledge of true names is a powerful key to full wizardry. A wizard may spend "his whole life to find out the name of one single thing—one single lost or hidden name. And still the lists are not finished. Nor will they be, till world's end" (*Ibid*., 46-7). The more the wizard learns names and charms, the more he becomes larger than life. He can control all objects and change the true names of things, something that surely disrupts the balance of the world, yet it is a source of great strength nonetheless. In fact, "the

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mastery of power" Ged aspires to is actually that of language, for he wants to "understand the language of the beasts and the speech of the leaves of the forest . . . and sway the winds with his word" (*Earthsea*, 16).

Magic is integral to *Earthsea* as part of its fantastic form and theme. Like language, magic is a system of signification. The true wizard is described as one who knows "the Balance and Pattern" (*Ibid*., 5) of magical language. In the novel, new signifiers are constantly invented to accommodate the magical word. The charms are given unfamiliar structures and words that are alien to English. For instance, when Ged wants to summon goats he says "Noth hierth malk man, hiolk han merth han!" (*Ibid*., 3) Many of the charms Ged learns come in the shape of songs and tales about wizards and magic. His aunt teaches him "what she knew of chanters' tales and the great Deeds she had sung him and all the words of the True Speech that she had learned . . . she taught again to Duny" (*Ibid*., 6).

Like language, magical signifiers construct 'meaning' and 'presence,' regardless of the ambiguity of the signified or the absence of the referent. It is with the aid of these signifiers that Earthsea becomes a well-constructed fictional world. According to poststructuralist theorists, creating 'presence' is the prevailing role of language since

> signifiers are magical performatives which produce a staggering array of amazing results: science, art, outrights fictions, graffiti, metaphysical systems, ethical exhortations, mythologies, scriptures, insults, commands, baptisms, poems, political constitutions, public prohibitions, curricula, colloquia, soliloquies, and logical systems, normal and abnormal discourses of all sorts. (Caputo, 107)

Since the creation of a new world, beings, and laws is in fact the function of language in the fantastic text, many critics put 'fantasy' among high literary forms. And so "Fantasy [is] . .

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. not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent" (Tolkien, 69).

Sometimes, the role of signifiers goes beyond 'constructing' presence to summoning it. For example, to invoke the "White God brothers of Atuan," the Kargs yell "Wuluah! Atwah!" (*Earthsea*, 11). Another role of these signifiers is constructing action. Many of these invented magical words function as speech acts. Articulating them results in actions like "finding, binding, mending, unsealing and revealing [objects]" (*Ibid*., 6).

In the novel, signifiers take precedence over their signifieds. Ogion tells Ged: "When you know that furfoil [a plant in Earthsea] in all its seasons root and leaf and flower . . . then you may learn its true name, knowing its being: which is more than its use" (*Ibid*., 17-8). This works as an analogy of language. It is not the actual use but the being, not an understanding of the signified but that of the signifier. However, the wizard, as well as the reader, should bear in mind that the magical word as a signifier is merely an illusion and not the real object. Ged and Yarrow, the sister of his best friend Vetch, discuss this matter as follows:

> When it comes suppertime at sea, why not say, Meat-pie! and the meat-pie appears, and you eat it?". . . "Well, we could do so. But we don't much wish to eat our words, as they say. *Meat-pie!* is only a word, after all . . . We can make it odorous, and savorous, and even filling, but it remains a word. It fools the stomach and gives no strength to the hungry man." (*Ibid*.,162)

Ged's statement suggests that the language of magic is an "illusion." It may construct the presence of an object but cannot actually create the object itself. Its strength comes from its ability to signify variable 'referents' and play on meaning, and for that it remains, like an illusion, the mere suggestion of an idea and a notion without an essence.

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Though the ability of magic is to construct the presence of an object without its essence, it remains a great source of power for wizards nonetheless. This is due to the fact that it creates an exact copy of the original that at first sight can deceive its observer as "true." Understanding and controlling its power is necessary for preserving the balance of Earthsea as explained in what follows:

> If some Mage-Sea master were mad enough to try to lay a spell of storm or calm over all the ocean, his spell must say . . . the name of every stretch and bit and part of the sea through all the Archipelago and all the Outer Reaches and beyond to where names cease . . . A mage can control only what is near him, what he can name exactly and wholly. And this is well. If it were not so, the wickedness of the powerful or the folly of the wise would long ago have sought to change what cannot be changed, and Equilibrium would fail. The unbalanced sea would overwhelm the islands where we perilously dwell, and in the old silence all voices and all names would be lost. (*Earthsea*, 47-8)

In the novel, the language of magic builds on those practiced throughout the archipelago. These languages differ from one nation to another and they play part in their cultures. In describing the Kargs, the narrator says:

> In those days the Kargad Empire was strong. Those are four great lands that lie between the Northern and the Eastern Reaches: Karego-At, Atuan, Hur-at-Hur, and Atnini. The tongue they speak there is not like any spoken in the Archipelago or the other Reaches, and they are a savage people, white-skinned, yellow-haired, and fierce, liking the sight of blood and the smell of burning towns. (*Ibid.*, 6-7)

The narrator introduces the Kargs's "tongue" before their physical feature. This works on two levels. For one thing, it shows how language can take precedence over physical

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features and this explains how the system of signification outweighs the objects of signification. For another, it stresses the cultural importance of language in characterizing any given society. Another language spoken in Earthsea is Hardic that

> has no more magic power in it than any other tongue of men, [it] has its roots in the Old Speech, that language in which things are named with their true names: and the way to the understanding of this speech starts with the Runes that were written when the islands of the world first were raised up from the sea. (*Earthsea,* 19)

Like Hardic, Earthsean languages build on "the Old Speech," the language that has played the strongest role in creating Earthsea and which is hardly explained thoroughly in the text. And so, this language remains a mystery, additionally because

> although the use of the Old Speech binds a man to truth, this is not so with dragons. It is their own language, and they can lie in it, twisting the true words to false ends, catching the unwary hearer in a maze of mirror words each of which reflects the truth and none of which leads anywhere. (*Ibid*., 90)

Associating 'truth' with 'language' may propose a contradiction for the deconstructive function of language and its breaking-down of unity and center. However, Le Guin evades the problem by pointing out to the dragons' ability to tell lies even in their use of this supposedly 'truthful' Old Speech. In this sense, it might set a center but with the potential of breaking it later.

The language of *Earthsea* is playful. Its signifiers roam freely away from their signified. They do not abide by a certain order, and have no specific origin. They function whether or not they have an 'actual' or a 'fixed' referential value. Its metaphors disrupt the logic of senses in phrases like "it took him a minute to see Duny's meaning" (*Ibid*., 10) and "of magic stronger than stone" (*Ibid*., 35). The language in which mages speak is ironic,

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playful and cryptic. For instance, when Ged reaches the island of Roke, he cannot communicate with its people, and the following incident is a case in point:

> [One] man looked at him sidelong a while and said, “The wise don't need to ask, the fool asks in vain,” and so went on along the street . . . Ged asked his question of an old woman with a basket of mussels, and she replied, “You cannot always find the Warder where he is, but sometimes you find him where he is not," and went on crying her mussels to sell. (*Earthsea*, 33)

To put it all together, language in *Earthsea* is a very important feature that assists its fantastic world. It creates the names of the persons, places, and creatures that exist in it. It brings magic, which is a very prominent feature of traditional fairytales, and presents it as a complex system of signification that has the ability to construct the presence of absent objects, control them, or even conquer them. In addition, it supports what has been stated earlier about the text’s approach to traditional binary opposites. What best illustrates the latter characteristic of the novel’s use of language is its opening epigraph. Here, the omniscient narrator makes reference to a song known to all the inhabitants of Earthsea that starts as follows:

> Only in silence the word,
>
> only in dark the light,
>
> only in dying life:
>
> bright the hawk's flight on the empty sky.
>
> -The Creation of Éa

“Word” as a synecdoche of language implies the central role language plays in the text. Also, pairs like “silence” and “word,” “dark” and “light”, and “dying” and “life” are juxtaposed with one another. According to Brian McHale, “juxtaposition” is one of the

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strategies employed in postmodernist fiction in its construction and deconstruction of the fictional space (45). In the epigraph and throughout the novel, Le Guin juxtaposes seemingly paradoxical images and signifiers continuously. By doing so, she puts them on the same level of meaning rather than place them in a fixed hierarchal order where one image or signifier surpasses another.

If, as Jackson states, the fantastic is a mode that expresses the writer's and/or the reader's desire, then it can be said that Le Guin's driving desire behind her use of fairytale features and language in creating Earthsea is to build a utopian construct. In her essay "The Critics, the Monsters, and the Fantasists" (2007), Le Guin writes:

> In reinventing the world of intense, unreproduceable, local knowledge, seemingly by a denial or evasion of current reality, fantasists are perhaps trying to assert and explore a larger reality than we now allow ourselves. They are trying to restore the sense — to regain the knowledge — that there is somewhere else, anywhere else, where other people may live another kind of life. The literature of imagination, even when tragic, is reassuring, not necessarily in the sense of offering nostalgic comfort, but because it offers a world large enough to contain alternatives. (87)

Earthsea is built on a balance between good and evil, light and darkness, power and knowledge. The importance of this balance is what Ged learns from his journey. At the School of Wizards, Master Hand teaches Ged that changing the essence of anything affects the powers of the world, unless a wizard does it with full knowledge of actions and their consequences. Any disruption of the balance has its ramifications on the world at large since

> The world is in balance, in Equilibrium. A wizard's power of Changing and of Summoning can shake the balance of the world. It is dangerous, that power. It is

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> most perilous. It must follow knowledge, and serve need. To light a candle is to cast a shadow... (*Earthsea*, 44)

In utopian fiction, “the existence of the ideal country is not meant to be taken literally, but as help in discovering another, hidden level of reality that could not otherwise be perceived” (Gerber, 4). By using the fairytale-based fantastic, Le Guin constructs a world that submits to her vision of what the world should be like. The world she creates is a well-balanced wholeness in its environment, societies, and people. Every island is self-dependent. Its inhabitants are active members who take part in building their community. In Earthsea, wizards are expected by their people to obtain and maintain the equilibrium by using their power for good ends. The narrator tells the story of how Ged protects his people from the harm of a dragon by obtaining the valuable knowledge of its name and conquering it, how he heals the sick, and how he casts protective charms on people’s boats so they return safely to their islands.

In this world, man and beast bond and support one another. Ged’s relationship with the “Otak,” one of Earthsea’s beasts, exemplifies one form of balance in the novel. This Otak saves Ged’s life once and dies in its second attempt to do the same thing. A beast’s love is a privilege. It is even a sign of innate power: “They say . . . that a man favored by a wild beast is a man to whom the Old Powers of stone and spring will speak in human voice” (*Ibid.*, 50). In this regard, the text draws attention to the kind of comfort and benefit the relationship between people and animals offers. It reminds the reader of a time when “animals were . . . more to us than meat, pests, or pets: they were fellow-creatures, colleagues, dangerous equals” (Le Guin, 2007, 87). It is this placement of man and beast on equal footing that adds up to the text’s utopian tenor. The fantastic allows this since “what

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fantasy generally does that the realistic novel generally cannot do is include the nonhuman as essential" (Le Guin, 2007, 87).

Though a symbiotic world, Le Guin's Earthsea is not idealistic. Ged's conflict with the shadow stands as proof. As Ged releases it, he disrupts the equilibrium, and so wherever he goes the weather becomes bleak, windy, and unstable. Accordingly,

> the ship turning again almost as if a whirlpool had caught her keel, he too grabbed hold of the sternpost to keep aboard, and Ged said to him, "Leave me at Serd and sail where you like. It's not against your ship this wind blows, but against me. (*Earthsea*, 97)

Not only does this shadow upset the balance of Earthsea, but it also affects that of Ged. As the shadow follows him, he becomes a fugitive everywhere he goes, and fear overwhelms his thoughts and even dreams: "his mind . . . went on dark paths seeking to imagine how the shadow would appear to him next, and how soon, and where" (*Ibid*., 131). Eventually, Ged confronts the shadow, calls it by name, and conquers it. The weather clears up, and the wound the shadow has left on the fabric of the world mends. The novel describes how

> [Ged] gazed for a long time, and then . . . stood up erect, holding his staff in his two hands as a warrior holds his long sword. He looked about at the sky, the sea, the brown swelling sail above him, his friend's face . . . "Estarriol," he said, "look, it is done. It is over." He laughed. "The wound is healed," he said, "I am whole, I am free." Then he bent over and hid his face in his arms, weeping like a boy. (*Ibid*., 180-1)

Towards its end, the novel offers relief. Its world restores peace and returns to its original state. Though the world Le Guin depicts sometimes seem distant from ours, yet it is not excluded from it. In this sense, fantastic worlds are not created by escapists who want to

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dissociate readers from their reality. On the contrary, these worlds are not far from ours. In its mimetic as well as marvelous features, the fantastic world wants to "remind . . . us of what we have denied, what we have exiled ourselves from" (Le Guin, 2007, 86).

This utopian turn of mind does not stand in exclusion from the text's deconstructive workings. The equilibrium of Earthsea is one that builds on self-contradictory aspects. This is suggested by the constant juxtaposition of opposites to break hierarchal orders. Evil exists in this world as well as ignorance and vulgarity. The main source of power is the language of magic which basically creates an "illusion." All such features hardly fall under traditional utopias. Nonetheless, it offers rather than imposes a new world for humanity and a better conception of things away from transcendentalism.

The preceding analysis of *Earthsea* has offered a comparative view of the fantastic as its use shifts from traditional fairytales to postmodern texts. The postmodern-based fantastic enriches the tradition of fairytales. It does not stand as a mere allegory or a superficial presentation of magical beings and events. It utilizes language as it constructs worlds and meanings (not absolute but multiple). It deconstructs the binary opposition of good and evil and adds a psychological dimension to the character of the villain. In this sense, "Faerie" in its traditional sense as the theme, the place, and people becomes multi-dimensional, complex, and representative of a creative use of language.

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Chapter Two
The Myth-based Fantastic: Barth's *Chimera* and al-Koni's *Gold Dust*

Barth's *Chimera* and al-Koni's *Gold Dust* employ the myth-based fantastic. They rely on the hesitation between the "mimetic" and the "marvelous" as they employ aspects of both. By doing so, they question the distinctions between reality, fantasy and fiction. Nevertheless, each novel follows a different approach to myth.

Where *Gold Dust* is concerned, the novel depicts the psychological manifestations of myth and its archetypes in the psyche of Ukhayyad, the son of a tribe's chief in the Tuareg desert, who shares a close relationship with his camel the piebald Mahri. This Mahri is said to be like no other in the desert for his noble breeding and unique hair. In one of their adventures, this camel gets the mange from a she-camel, and it eats up his skin beyond any medical cure. Sheikh Musa, Ukhayyad's mentor, advises him to feed the camel silphium, a magical plant that causes a temporary madness before curing an ailment. This is what happens to the Mahri who, in his tantrum of madness, drags Ukhayyad across the desert in a painful, life-threatening journey. After the Mahri recovers, the two become closer than ever, even when Ukhayyad marries the beautiful Ayur against his father's will.

As the draught afflicts the desert, Ukhayyad pawns his camel to Dudu, Ayur's rich cousin who is secretly in love with her. Both the camel and the owner are unable to live apart, and for this reason Ukhayyad divorces his wife at Dudu's command. To reward Ukhayyad for his decision, Dudu gives him a handful of gold dust. Once Ukhayyad becomes free from family obligations, he resorts to a desolate area with the Mahri and forgets all about his past. A traveler passes by him and tells him the story of the man who sold his wife and son and who is now an object of gossip and ridicule. To avenge himself

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for being slandered, Ukhayyad kills Dudu on his wedding day. An angry mob of Dudu's relatives chases Ukhayyad and they eventually kill him.

The preceding sequence of the novel's events is perceived differently by Ukhayyad who sees himself and his world in an archetypal manner, which relies heavily on the hero myth. He unconsciously creates an image of himself as a mythic hero confronting all forms of evil in a pursuit of truth, purification, and solitude. In some instances, this hero image takes hold of him in his actions and thoughts through dreams and daydreams, making him lose proper comprehension of external reality.

Chimera builds on ancient Greek myths and the story of *The Thousand and One Nights* (hereafter referred to as *Nights*). It revolves around the figures of Scheherazade (nicknamed Sherry), Sherry's sister Dunyazade (nicknamed Doony), Perseus, and Bellerophon caught in the action of constructing and reconstructing their own stories. The novel's structure resembles what is deemed to be an intricacy of "Chinese boxes": the narrative falls into three novellas, each of which parodies the original story that it builds on. In the first novella, "Dunyazadiad," the frame-story features Doony telling a story to Shah Zaman on their wedding night which then unfolds six other stories. Barth himself appears in some of them as a "Genie" coming from the twentieth century to aid Scheherazade by telling her the frame story of her book and its sub-stories, all of which are modifications on the original in *Nights*. As "Dunyazadiad" shifts from one story to another, either by a smooth transition or by breaking the preceding one, the reader finds himself or herself shifting between different fictional frames.

The other two novellas in *Chimera*, "Perseid" and "Bellerophoniad," named after the mythic heroes Perseus and Bellerophon, take place almost twenty years after their well-known "mythic" journeys have taken place. In the original Greek myth, Perseus kills

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Medusa, saves the beautiful Andromeda, and becomes the King of Argos. Bellerophon's heroic action includes taming the wild Pegasus and the slaying of the Chimera, a monster that has a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail. However, in *Chimera*, these two heroes suffer from a mid-life crisis and for that attempt to reconstruct their myths and their characters as mythic heroes to recover their past glory. Their original myths being outdated, they act like anti-heroes as they forget how to handle a quest. On some occasions, they have to be reminded of the "Pattern" of mythology in order to do things the "mythic" way. Each of these sections represents a number of frame stories that tell about the original myth, the present situation of the heroes, the new myth they try to build, and the world outside the text as indicated by the character of Barth and allusions to historical figures and events.

Gold Dust and *Chimera* employ the fantastic that builds on the hero myth and its archetypes to explore the tension between reality and fiction. In *Chimera*, the shift from one fictional world to another, from one mythical frame to another, causes this tension. However, the text being metafictional and thus admitting its fictional nature, the tension caused is received as an aesthetic effect by character and reader alike. On the other hand, in *Gold Dust* the hero myth operates on the level of the unconscious through the archetypal images stored in Ukhayyad's "collective unconscious."

The scholarship on these two novels has not elaborated on the tension their myth-based fantastic creates and how it functions on a psychological level in *Gold Dust* and an aesthetic one in *Chimera*. To fill this gap, this chapter analyzes the shape of the hero myth in these postmodern novels and how in *Chimera* the individual (author and character alike) elaborately and consciously constructs a mythic narrative, whereas in *Gold Dust*, the archetypes owing to the hero myth highly contribute to the individual's perception of

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reality, and it affects his behavior. To achieve its purpose, this chapter traces Ukhayyad's archetypal perception of the world and events around him as to show how the hero myth controls him. As for *Chimera*, the study examines how the novel exposes its stories and myths as fictional constructs, how it relies on metafictional techniques for this endeavor, and how it uses art as a metaphor of the world outside it.

In Jungian terminology, Ukhayyad, the protagonist of *Gold Dust*, fits the psychological type of an introverted person who relies on intuition. As a psychic activity, "intuition" means that Ukhayyad captures external phenomena only to pursue some hidden meaning behind them. Introversion suggests that Ukhayyad's mental activities primarily operate to understand the truth behind his own perceptions of external experience. Throughout the novel, Ukhayyad continuously falls into states of apprehension where he asks a number of questions. Ukhayyad's questioning increases the more he distances himself from his society. He usually wonders about his misfortunes, the harshness of the desert, life and death

Ukhayyad's reflections should imply an alert mind, yet his archetypal way of thinking and his gradual detachment from reality are the symptoms of a "psychosis." Explaining this condition requires turning to Jung's concept of the "collective unconscious." It is an aspect of the psyche that resides in the deepest part of the unconscious. In it, a number of psychic elements develop into a group whose nucleus is an archetypal image. Though the source of this image is hard to trace, it builds on a mythic or religious archetype that was founded ages ago, and that plays an important role in the individual's culture. Jung calls this part of the unconscious "collective" because of its universal nature. Its basic archetypes, regardless of the "images" they develop in, are shared by almost all individuals. (Jung, 3-4)

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Ukhayyad's "collective unconscious" features elements from the Tuareg culture. As a tribal community, they praise the valor of warriors, and consider them the pride of their people. Their way of living builds on pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions. For instance, they have Islamic scholars and Sheikhs, but they also consult witches and pray at the shrines of pagan idols like Tanit, the goddess of love and fertility. They believe in the power of magic and the evil of envy and lust. They also relate evil to darkness and the world of jinn. In this sense, these "images" of evil can relate to the archetype of the "Devil"— a representative of pure malice. Other archetypes that are part of Ukhayyad's psyche are "the Hero," "the Great Mother," "the Magician," "the Anima," "the Shadow," "the Wise Old Man," and archetypal events like the hero's "Journey," "Rebirth" or "Dying and Rising."

Whether we are aware of it or not, the archetypal images in the collective unconscious play an important role in the psyche in helping us comprehend our world. However, they should remain under control, especially if they rise to one's consciousness. Once they are there, they may cause a psychosis (Jung, 287). This happens when they are too large and powerful for the consciousness to control. Consequently, they may manifest themselves in dreams, daydreams, and some other circumstances, causing a rift between the individual and the external world. This psychological influence of archetypes manifests itself in three elements of this novel: the nature of the relationship Ukhayyad has with his camel, the way he perceives some aspects of his life, and his recurring dream where he sees himself followed by an anonymous dark figure in a window-less house.

From the very beginning, the novel depicts the strong relationship Ukhayyad has with the Mahri. At first, the reader understands that the relationship between man and beast is encouraged by the Tuareg people who believe that "animals are superior to humans. . . [and that] a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (al-Koni, 19; 23). However, the

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resemblances between both characters make their relationship more intriguing. Like his camel, Ukhayyad is of a noble origin, he has never fought a battle, and he has many escapades with the other sex. On many occasions, Ukhayyad sees himself through his camel. In fact, he sees the camel a better version of him and for whom songs should be written praising his "innate qualities and extolling his talents, likening him to warrior heroes" (al-Koni, 6).

Using the word "hero" to describe the Mahri implies Ukhayyad's unconscious view of *himself* as one, for Jung believes that people see in others what they are unconscious of in themselves— he calls it "projection" (Jung, 63). What Ukhayyad does here is that he projects his own image of himself as a hero on his camel, even though both have never done anything befitting of heroes like fighting battles or defending the honor of a maiden, for instance. This hero comes to full view when Ukhayyad is in the company of his camel. Together with the piebald, Ukhayyad is above all others. He walks around confident and self-conceited. He sees himself "whole"—an archetypal feature of a god or a superhuman being (Cox, 152-4). In light of the role the camel plays in constructing this hero image, he should be seen interchangeably with Ukhayyad, as though both are the same person, or rather two splinters of Ukhayyad's self that only becomes whole when the two parts are joined.

Ukhayyad meets his first predicament when the Mahri gets the mange from a she-camel, which functions as an archetypal image of the *femme fatale* whose powerful charms are dangerous if not deadly. Being absorbed in the hero image, he sees this event as a reversal of fortune resulting from the sin of lust, or what he calls "blind virility" (al-Koni, 17). Ukhayyad empathizes with his camel. To him, pain affects man and beast. He says:

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> He [the Mahri] was now the pale and wretched image of his former self. God may create, but disease can transform His creation into completely other beings. And as with beasts, so too with humans (al-Koni, 26)

However, he does not hold himself or the camel accountable for this state of being. Instead, he blames "women" for it. This is because Ukhayyad relates the woman, or what Jung calls the "anima," with the archetypal image of Eve "who drove Adam from the garden of paradise" (*Ibid*., 98). Women as the cause of mischief and moral deviation are one shape of evil. Evidently enough, the reader observes how Ukhayyad continuously uses words like "serpent . . . devil . . . [and] Eve" (*Ibid*., 20; 46; 66) in reference to women.

Ukhayyad would not accept the death of the Mahri, who has been his sole companion ever since his mother's death. In his pursuit of a cure, he resorts to feeding the animal silphium. He gets this idea from Sheikh Musa who is, for Ukhayyad, an archetypal image of the "wise old man." This archetype stands for "the superior master and teacher, the archetype of the spirit, who symbolizes the pre-existent meaning hidden in the chaos of life" (Jung, 35). His archetypal role manifests itself in the teacher-student relationship he has with Ukhayyad. When Ukhayyad's mother died, the Sheikh "treated him like a sincere friend . . . [He] found a path to his heart" (al-Koni, 70). He is the one who warns Ukhayyad about the "evil" of women and the importance of "patience" to survive any adversary.

The Sheikh's advice to use a magical plant fits in the context of the hero's journey. In many mythical journeys, magical plants are means of aid. However, the price of using silphium is sanity. It drives whoever uses it to madness. For this reason, in the Tuareg belief, this plant is associated with the jinn (another archetypal image of the Devil), for "silphium was another name for the fury of jinn and madness itself" (*Ibid*., 19). Madness too as caused by this plant becomes a shape of evil.

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Before feeding his camel the magical plant, Ukhayyad visits the shrine of Tanit. Supplication and the offer of sacrifice at a god's or goddess's shrine are aspects of the mythic journey Ukhayyad has set for himself. He believes that praying at this shrine will save his camel from permanent madness, and so as he prostrates himself and raises his hands, he cries:

> O lord of the desert, god of the ancients! I promise to offer up to you one fat camel of sound body and mind. Cure my piebald of his malignant disease and protect him from the madness of silphium! You are the all hearing, the all knowing. (Al-Koni, 29-30)

Ironically enough, he does not know that the shrine belongs to Tanit. He thinks it belongs to a saint or an anonymous pagan idol. He also gives the promise of a sacrifice, a camel, rather than present one directly. It is through such shortcomings that we see the discrepancy between Ukhayyad's unconscious thoughts (regarding the hero and his journey) and his actions (how he tries to fulfill this image in actual reality).

Praying to Tanit does not restrain Ukhayyad from entreating other religious symbols. At one point, he shifts rapidly from one symbol to another as apparent in what follows:

> Miracles often happened in the desert, and he was not asking for a large one. He was asking the jinn of the silphium field only this: to take his friend's suffering and spare him. He prayed and pleaded incessantly. The tomb of the old saint would not let him down. He would not lose hope . . . One had to heed signs . . . These signs were the language of God. The one who ignored them would be damned in this world. Whoever paid them no attention would receive what was coming to him. God protect us from that! (Al-Koni, 34)

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The prayers reflect Ukhayyad's "neurosis" on the matter of religion, for one of the symptoms of neurosis is a behavior that is "out of proportion" (Cox, 44). In a situation that requires a prayer, Ukhayyad goes to the measure of invoking "God," "saint" and "jinn" altogether and put them on the same level. Throughout the novel, Ukhayyad also combines elements pertaining to both Islam and paganism. For instance, he pursues the advice of the witch doctors of Kano because "to seek out the knowledge of scholars at any cost was . . . a duty in Muslim law" (al-Koni, 31). This indicates Ukhayyad's religious uncertainty. In this sense, his psyche exhibits a chaos of religious archetypal symbols that roam freely and take equal turns in affecting Ukhayyad's consciousness. The preceding quotation shows how Ukhayyad desperately relies on religion in this stressful situation, but it also suggests that he has not yet reached a level of spiritual maturity where he can invoke a deity pertaining to a definite belief or religion.

Ukhayyad's prayers pave the way for the hard part of the journey that follows. He calls it "the battle" (*Ibid*., 34). Though this naming suggests the fighting of a villain in the archetypal sense, the enemy here is madness. To Ukhayyad, this enemy is worthy of battle because, as suggested before, it is an archetypal image of evil. For this reason, when madness overtakes the Mahri, it "possesses" him like a demon. And so Ukhayyad sees how the piebald

> stood frightened, stiffening his tail, then began to whip it as if he were chasing imaginary flies. . . the animal began to chomp at the air and spit up white spume . . . The raw skin dripped sweat . . . He cried out with a horrible gurgling sound that pricked Ukhayyad's heart . . . His head jerked back as he stood up. Then blood began to spill from his nostrils . . . In the white lather on his skin, blood and pus now mixed with sweat . . . The beast opened his jaws as far as they would go, and

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froth, mucous and black bile spilled out . . . The jinn have possessed him. (Al-Koni, 34-7)

To be cleansed completely from the disease, the Mahri suffers a lot. Ukhayyad calls this stage the "purgatory" (*Ibid*., 54). It is part of the cleansing process through which the hero redeems himself from a punishment. The spiritual bond between Ukhayyad and his beast makes them companions in this suffering. As Ukhayyad holds on to the Mahri all across the desert, the latter drags him through its sand, rocks, and grass. It becomes a journey through "hell" (*Ibid*., 41).

Throughout this hellish trip, which denotes the "descent" motif, Ukhayyad invokes "patience," the "god of thirst" (*Ibid*., 40). Mythologizing"patience" suggests a personal variation on the archetypal journey of the hero. In mythic tradition, the hero is an active character. What makes him larger than life is either brain or brawn. On the other hand, what Ukhayyad relies on in his journey is patience, a passive state of being. Not only does Ukhayyad rely on it, but he also depicts it as though it is a secret formula: a "talisman that protects forever in the desert . . . [for] when God gives you patience in the desert, he is giving you everything in the world" (*Ibid*., 40).

The "black skin" of the Mahri is now "torn off" and blood covers him like "a solid piece of meat" (*Ibid*., 44). Ukhayyad recovers consciousness unaware of his surroundings, almost naked, and covered with blood. "His eyes had lost their ability to see . . . [and] he had lost the ability to speak" (*Ibid*., 50). For Ukhayyad, he and his camel have experienced a "rebirth," a "return to the womb," for nakedness and undeveloped senses pertain to a prenatal state of existence. In this state, they have to go on a "trial" to find water—the bringer of life. At this stage, Ukhayyad has become wholly absorbed in the archetype of the hero and his journey of redemption. So when he comes across an abandoned well, he calls

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it "the abyss" that he needs to descend (al-Koni, 50). There, he sees "his own birth pass before his eyes" before he eventually finds the "river of paradise" (*Ibid.*, 51) and drinks from it. These stages fall under the "dying and rising" course of events the mythic hero undergoes to redeem himself from a moral burden and achieve self-elevation. This is still not the case with Ukhayyad and his camel. What remains for the journey to be completed is for the Mahri to get the prize he deserves after enduring all this pain and that is the recovery of his unique hair. In the Tuareg belief, for this to happen the Mahri should be castrated. Again, Ukhayyad relates this to the archetypal idea of the sacrifice through which he and his camel will guarantee "purity," "attain beauty" and "meet God" (*Ibid.*, 58). Once the action is taken, and the camel is castrated, the journey consummates its cleansing course.

Upon his return from this "heroic quest," Ukhayyad finds it difficult to adapt to a monotonous way of living especially after this quest has given him a "euphoric" emotion: "a strong sense of inward well-being, which accompanies a feeling of one's own importance" (Cox, 92). This feeling being "inward," the external world for Ukhayyad becomes secondary, almost absent. In fact, he starts perceiving most external experience as evil. His father becomes a cause of conflict when he stands in the way of him marrying Ayur, an anima whom he sees in an idealistic manner. Ukhayyad projects on this woman the image of the very beautiful and desirable anima whose "bewitching smile" and "divine voice" make her "a goddess of charm and allure" (al-Koni, 66-7; 73). Once he marries her, he expels his father from his world and the archetypal role he has owned as the father figure is given to the Sheikh.

Another event in Ukhayyad's life that he perceives in relation to the hero myth is the drought. When it pervades the desert, everyone suffers. At first, Ukhayyad holds himself responsible for this natural disaster. The reason he gives is his inability to fulfill his

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promise of a sacrifice to Tanit, for he slaughters the camel he has fattened on his wedding celebration. His wife urges him to sell the Mahri to feed her and her son, and he refuses. Consequently, the archetypal image he has had of Ayur evaporates like an illusion. She becomes an agent of evil and the reason why Ukhayyad has broken his promise to Tanit in the first place. Now,

> He despised women . . . he looked at things with his eyes rather than his heart . . . Ayur's magic began to dissipate . . . once upon a time, he had thought it was as powerful as the vision of fate he saw during his tumble into the well . . . It was this woman who had brought calamity on the piebald; she had driven Ukhayyad to break his promise. (Al-Koni, 79)

Ukhayyad's "fantasies" may take over him sometimes, but external world drags him back. Now, drought is the reality of the desert world. For this reason, Ukhayyad does not want to neglect his role as a father. He has a responsibility towards his wife and son for "he who has dependents is indefatigable" (*Ibid.*, 83). Responsibility stands as a powerful force of external reality. For the Tuareg people, neglecting one's family responsibilities shames the person. Eventually, Ukhayyad decides to pawn his camel. However, trouble arises when it is Dudu, Ayur's cousin who is secretly in love with her, who takes the Mahri. Once the camel is taken by Dudu's men, Ukhayyad loses his sense of "wholeness," and so he questions himself:

> How could . . . [he] throw him off, as he might toss away a ring from his finger? How could he cast him to the barbarians in the Danbaba desert? Could a woman, a boy, and a stupid thing that people in the brutal desert called 'shame' make him abandon his divine half and trade it for the illusion of the world? And what was a woman? She was the noose Satan created so that he could lead men around by their

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> necks! What was a son? The toy fathers play with, thinking they will find immortality and salvation . . . And what was shame? Another illusion created by the people of the desert so as to shackle themselves with chains and rope. (Al-Koni, 113-5)

What is apparent in Ukhayyad's thoughts is that he sees the rules by which the world around him operates as illusions. Ukhayyad's wife and son become "worldly possessions" (*Ibid*., 116) from which he has to cleanse himself. The only truth lies in his relationship with the Mahri, so it is no wonder that after Ukhayyad eventually divorces his wife in exchange for the Mahri, he retires from his society.

After Ukhayyad isolates himself, he spends his days in wanderings and reflections and he feels completely free and closer to God in a way "that can be found only in the quiet emptiness of infinite wilderness" (*Ibid*., 129). Yet again, actual reality proves itself more powerful for the individual to ignore. So upon discovering that people have been slandering his name behind his back, "the things of the world began to take on their old meanings again" (*Ibid*., 134). Dudu becomes the new evil, the Devil, Ukhayyad has to terminate. In addition, now, "the noose went to being a beloved wife. The doll became, once more, his progeny and heir to this mantle, and "The sham illusion became, once again, shame—actual shame" (*Ibid*., 134).

In the context of this tension between consciousness and the unconscious, Ukhayyad's psychosis finds its way to his dreams. He sees in his sleep a dream that is not a new one. It has come to him as a child. In this dream, Ukhayyad finds himself in a wrecked house without windows and doors. It is a dark place, and he feels he is being followed by some "specter that never actually appeared, neither as substance nor shadow" (*Ibid*., 137).

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Explaining the significance of this dream requires referring to Jung's view of the shadow archetype. Jung states that

> The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. For what comes after the door is, surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside or outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is the world of water, where all life floats in suspension . . . where I am invisibly this *and* that; where I experience the other in myself and the other-than- myself experiences me. (Jung, 21)

In light of what Jung says here, it becomes clear that what follows Ukhayyad in this window-less and door-less house, probably a symbol of the physical aspect of the individual, is Ukhayyad's shadow. This shadow is representative of the dark, unconscious part of the self. As Ukhayyad's thoughts throughout the novel show, he has made others the cause of his problems. In this sense, his absorption in the archetypal traits and battles of the hero has prevented him from realizing his innate evil.

Though this dream indeed exhibits the shadow, at this point, Ukhayyad is still unaware of its identity. In a sense, he is still unaware of the evil in him. Throughout his childhood, this dream has visited his sleep. Now, it visits him as an adult. It is as though his psyche is demanding a balance, an "individuation," that reconciles the conscious and the unconscious. This supports Jung's view of the "self" as the "guide" that induces the individual to seek psychological stability (Cox, 156-7).

One possible reason why Ukhayyad yet denies his "shadow" is that there remains a figure of evil the "heroic" Ukhayyad has still not vanquished and that is Dudu. To

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Ukhayyad, Dudu becomes the incarnation of the "Devil" himself. Thus, when he meets him bathing in a spring, he sees that

> his ears were suddenly huge, and flopped around like those of a donkey. His pate was bald and eggish . . . his beard was a billy goat's . . . [and] his body was suddenly all skin and bones. (Al-Koni, 144)

In a sense, when Ukhayyad kills him, he ends what he sees as the final shape of evil around him. Ironically enough, however, external reality again ends this euphoric sensation for now he is chased by Dudu's relatives who want to avenge their kin's death.

It is noteworthy that after the death of Dudu, the Mahri becomes almost an absent character, as though this camel has done its part in perfecting the hero's required "wholeness." But now that Ukhayyad's inevitable death becomes near, the pressing fact rules out the hero myth, and the hero image with its supplements evaporates. Ukhayyad now sees his reality without the high influence of his collective unconscious and its mythic archetypes. The situation now is well-set for the psyche to reach a balance, and so as Ukhayyad catches his last breath, the recurring dream comes again in the form of a vision. However, this time

> the invisible being of his dreams finally show[ed] itself as clear as day. It had finally become manifest in that moment when Ukhayyad could no longer tell anyone what he had seen. (*Ibid.*, 164)

In this final dream, Ukhayyad sees the shadow, but he does not disclose to the reader its identity. Nonetheless, applying Jung's understanding of the shadow motif unravels the mystery. The dream implies that Ukhayyad finally encounters and perceives himself as he truly is: a human being with innate darkness rather than a mythic hero whose self-righteousness fights the world's evil. Regardless of the novel ending with death,

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Ukhayyad's final statement and its implication of self-realization suggests that his earlier psychotic condition is resolved. Now the unconscious is in balance with the consciousness, and the fantasy Ukhayyad has been living in through the workings of his collective unconscious with its content of archetypes dissolves.

The preceding analysis of *Gold Dust* traces the influence of the hero myth on the individual. In his blind submission to archetypal images, Ukhayyad has *unconsciously* created his own world where he is a hero vanquishing evil and pursuing salvation. This has had the effect of setting Ukhayyad in the borderline between his actual reality and a psychologically-constructed one. This state of intermediacy causes a tension for Ukhayyad, and it temporarily hinders him from finding a balance. By the end of this long process of individuation, "certainty" replaces hesitation" as Ukhayyad finally comes face-to-face with his shadow and understands it as an irreducible aspect of the "self."

Putting the novel's psychological aspect aside, *Gold Dust* is also about the Tuareg life in the Sahara. Al-Koni is well-known for his integration of this culture in his works. Being a Tuareg tribesman himself, he wants to introduce the reader to a culture vivid with aspects of mythology and customs. In this sense, the use of the hero myth, even in what suggests a psychosis for the individual, serves as a mode that illuminates a not very well-known culture and represents its perception of values like heroism, redemption, sacrifice, love, responsibility, and honor.

In *Chimera*, the mythic situation is reversed. Here, writer and character *construct* and direct the hero myth. This process of construction is *bared*, and so the novel and its myth expose themselves as fictional constructs. Barth calls this kind of novel "a deliberate imitation of a novel" (Barth, 1995, 168). It is what critics have come to call *metafiction*: a

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fiction that is “self-reflective,” “self-informing," “auto-referential,” “auto-representational,” and “narcissistic” (Hutcheon, 1-2).

Metafiction is not only a literary practice, for writers of metafiction “explore a *theory* of fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction” (Waugh, 2). Accordingly, metafiction becomes a new aesthetic theory that relates to aspects of postmodern literature. Like postmodernism, metafiction discredits “realistic” approaches to life and literature. Instead, it builds different fictional worlds, lays bare the literary technique, and continuously reminds the reader that it is all an image. By doing so, the writer does not only create a work of fiction and make a statement about it, but he or she also breaks down the distinction between ‘creation’ and ‘criticism’ and “merges them into the concepts of ‘interpretation’ and ‘deconstruction’” (*Ibid.*, 6).

By showing the reader how literature (realistic and fantastic alike) is an artifact, metafiction postulates that “reality” is one as well, and so the reader should question it rather than take it for granted (Waugh, 2). To do so, the writers of metafiction criticize the conventions of realism. This they do by using the aesthetic techniques of these same conventions and shaping them into literary parodies. In *Chimera*, Barth uses the story-within-story tradition. Like many metafictional writers, he produces a chaos of narrations arranged together in a Chinese-box structure (*Ibid*., 30). All through the novel, the narrative shifts from one story frame to another. On this “framing” technique, Waugh states that

> some contemporary novels are constructed with extreme shifts of context or frame (from realism to fantasy, for instance), but without any explanatory metalingual commentary to facilitate the transition from one to the other. The reader is thus never offered a rational explanation for the shift nor provided with any means of relating one context to another. (*Ibid*., 37)

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It can be said that in *Chimera*, what the reader undergoes is the constant shifting from one context to another and from a fictional world to another. One involves the original story, the other is the parody of that story, and another is the final product that involves the original and its new version. The shift from one frame to another is perplexing for the reader. It creates what Waugh calls "a formal tension" (Waugh, 6). By analogy, this tension parallels Todorov's concept of "hesitation." Both are formal conditions that result in the reader's and/or character's inability to explain a literary event, which neither belongs to the property of the mimetic nor the marvelous. In the metafictional text, tension prevents the readers from indulging themselves in the text's world, so that they remain conscious and critical of its fictional nature. As Barth builds on ancient myth and tale, he creates and breaks frames, parodies them, and keeps the reader in this state of tension.

Though the first part of *Chimera*, "Dunyazadiad," does not fall under myth, for it builds on *Nights*, it paves the way for the myths of Perseus and Bellerophon. In literary history, the story of *Nights* manifests itself as the archetype of all story-within-story narratives. In Barth's words, it is "not the story of Scheherazade, but the story of the story of her stories" (*Chimera*, 55). By representing its form, Barth is making a statement about the major aesthetic technique he is to apply all through the novel, and so, sets its metafictional tone from the very beginning..

"Dunyazadiad" starts with Doony telling an anonymous listener the first sub-story in this narrative that takes us to the beginning of the original story. It features Sherry planning a mission through which she can protect her fellow women from the malice of the king. The basic plan is that Sherry gives herself away to King Shahryar and by means of doing *something*, she would delay her death. In this story, tension occurs when Doony gives the reasons why her sister is doing all of this. She says that Sherry

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> besides being Homecoming Queen, valedictorian-elect, and a four-letter varsity athlete . . . had a private library of a thousand volumes and the highest average in the history of the campus. Every graduate department in the East was after her with fellowships—but she was so appalled at the state of the nation that she dropped out of school in her last semester to do full-time research on a way to stop Shahryar from killing all our sisters and wrecking the country. (*Ibid*., 5-6)

This quotation demonstrates how the text exhibits a shift between the marvelous and the mimetic. The way it depicts Scheherazade stands in opposition to the original tale. In *Nights*, the tale describes an ancient world whose setting, character, and event follow unnatural laws. Here, however, the same ancient world exhibits aspects of modern reality. Sherry is a genius in academia who went to high school and college, where she conducted scholarly research on the King.

Another sub-story in Dunyazadiad that pertains to this tension concerns Barth himself. A new addition to the original story, Barth enters the text as a character, usually referred to as the "visitor" or the "Genie." What brings him to the scene of *Nights* is the magical formula "The key to the treasure is the treasure" (*Chimera*, 11). Apparently, he and Sherry say it simultaneously, and so he arrives at the moment where Sherry is praying for a miracle, for an inspiration, to aid her with the mission to come. The depiction of this character adds to the framing tension:

> He was a writer of tales . . . in a land on the other side of the world . . . Like Shahryar, the Genie's life was in disorder—but as far from harboring therefore a grudge against womankind, he was distractedly in love with a brace of new mistresses . . . His career, too, had a hiatus which he would have been pleased to call turning point . . . he wished neither to repudiate nor to repeat his past

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performances; he aspired to go beyond them toward a future they were not attuned to and, by some magic, at the same time go back to the original springs of narrative. (*Chimera*, 9-10)

Again, the text exhibits a breaking-down of the traditional narrative frame. It presents an autobiographical sketch of Barth. Hypothetically speaking, it is "a thinly-disguised version" of this writer (Powell, 60. It suggests an "autobiographical" tone because Barth himself was concerned with questions regarding his literary endeavors, and how he can be creative and produce something of his own. In fact, the quotation here directly makes reference to problems of narrative-making associated with postmodernism, namely what critics have come to call "the death of the novel." These critics believed that the novel has exhausted its possibilities, and for that, it will not offer anything new. As the quotation shows, the Genie suggests that *going back* to old narrative forms is the solution. However, he does not know how to go in spirals rather than circles and take the story upward rather than lose track in repetitions (*Ibid*., 10).

When the Genie discovers that Sherry has not yet decided that telling stories would solve her dilemma, he takes advantage of the situation. At this point, the "Dunyazadiad" shifts to another sub-story— "the frame-story" (*Ibid*., 14) of the original *Nights*. On this visit and the ones that follow, Barth tells Sherry everything about the original story. By knowing it, Sherry becomes in charge of her own story as she directs it along the original line but with slight shifts away from it once in a while. In short, the story of *Nights* is rewritten. This also resolves Barth's writer's block as he becomes an active agent in the remaking of the story (Stark, 134-5).

From that point on, the story becomes a deconstruction of the original one. Readers who are acquainted with the original tale will find themselves continuously shifting lanes,

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hesitating between the basal text and the new one. As the story unravels itself, some narrative aspects become clearer. For instance the anonymous listener to whom Doony is talking turns out to be Shah Zaman. They are on their wedding night, and Doony is telling him all the sub-stories aforementioned as to give him the reason why she wants to kill him. Meanwhile, Sherry is said to be in another room with the King doing the same thing. After Doony finishes with her story, the Shah takes over the narrative. In a new sub-story, he tells Doony that he has lied to his brother; he has not killed any woman. In fact, he has been sparing women their lives and sending them to live in a place of their own after they cut off their right breast, which is a parody of the myth of the Amazonian women. As a reaction, Doony

> yawned and shivered. "I can't imagine what you're talking about. Am I expected to believe that preposterous business of Breastless Pilgrims and Tragic Views?"
>
> "Yes!" cried Shah Zaman, and then let his head fall back to the pillow. "They are too important to be lies. Fictions maybe, but [they are] truer than fact." (*Chimera*, 52-3)

At this stage, *Chimera* clearly establishes a correlation between "fiction," "lie," and "fact." No bordering lines isolate these three concepts. They are mutually related, and all are constructs. The privilege fiction has over fact is its admittance of its own artificiality, whereas fact claims an empirical superiority over fiction. In this sense, fiction acknowledges its own nature, and for that, becomes "truer" than fact itself.

Towards the story's end, dawn arrives without Doony killing the Shah, and so she postpones it to the next night. Ironically enough, this event exhibits a reversal of roles, since now it is the woman who wants to kill and the man who tells stories. By the end of it, the novel exhibits a major break of frames. This is when Barth "the writer" presents a

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criticism of his preceding narrative as he says: "Dunyazade's story begins in the middle; in the middle of my own—I can't conclude it—but it must end in the night that all good mornings come to" (*Chimera*, 55). He proceeds to say that those who accept an open-ending surely "possess a treasure" (*Ibid*, 56), an understanding of the importance of a narrative merely for the intrinsic value of narration. The open ending makes the story a spiral and not a circle, just as Barth has wanted. As a spiral, the story moves within the original text only to turn outside it like a snail's shell that curves without an end.

In "Perseid," the narrative also moves in a spiral way. Here, Perseus is in heaven with Medusa, whom he presumably decapitated in the original myth. He tells her a number of stories arranged in two groups: the original mythic quest and the new one he has undertaken to restore his glory. In this sense, the frame story is the one that features Perseus telling the two myths. What supports the tension resulting from shifting between the old and the recent myths is a number of metafictional techniques. These are the total breakdown of time and space, self-reflexive images, and explicit parody (Waugh, 22).

In what corresponds to Greek literary tradition, "Perseid" starts *in medias res*. Perseus is telling Medusa about his attempt to reconstruct a new hero myth out of the old one. However, the story does not go back and forth in time through flashbacking and foreshadowing. On the contrary, it continuously breaks time, just like a spiral. Time moves in turns and curves, fluctuating between the time of the frame-story and that of the sub-stories. Every frame, every story, has its own time and setting. In a sense, as the reader shifts from one frame to the other, he or she travels between and through different fictional constructs.

As "king and mythic hero" (*Chimera*, 68), Perseus narrates how he finds himself lost in the Libyan Desert writing his name (in English letters!) on the sand and with a slight

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amnesia. He then finds himself in a palace with the beautiful Calyxa. She tells him that they are in heaven where tourists come to visit and where Calyxa spends her time with Perseus helping him restore his memory. In fact, this she does by showing him two panels with detailed "murals" that represent his mythic quest as a hero and the new one he has started. In their thorough depiction of Perseus' life, these murals are self-reflexive images. They are a form of art revolving around another. Perseus finds them highly useful. They become a visual version of his tales. From every painting, he deduces the events of his "mythic" story and the present one.

Every day, Perseus narrates what one painting represents. The first panel of his life shows how his mother was impregnated by Zeus in the shape of a golden shower, how his grandfather puts her and the child in a box and sends them off to an island, and all through the parts where he sees himself holding the Gorgon's head, saving Andromeda, and both getting crowned king and queen of Argos. Perseus skims through the paintings that depict his ancient hero myth. In some parts, he reduces the events into "et cetera" (*Chimera*, 61). By doing so, the storyteller avoids repetition and exhaustion. It is not the original myth that interests the reader of this metafictional text, but the re-making of it. The role of the original hero myth becomes merely to intensify the tension and to remind the reader that it is all fiction— a representation. By analogy, the reader may apply this on the mimetic literary practice. Waugh states that if a writer "sets out to 'represent' the world, he or she realizes fairly soon that the world, as such, cannot be represented" (Waugh, 3). In this regard, realistic writings that claim an absolute representation of reality fail in their mission simply because reality cannot be given a comprehensive definition.

The second panel tells the story of a man in his forties wanting to become a hero again. What triggers this decision, in Perseus' words, is that

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> the kids were grown and restless; Andromeda and I had become different people; our marriage was on the rocks. The kingdom took care of itself, my fame was sure enough—but I'd lost my shine with my golden locks. (*Chimera*, 71)

Clearly, the depiction parodies the ancient mythic image of Perseus. It is as though the text answers the question: How would a mythic hero be like years after his adventure? Apparently, the passage of time is overpowering, and so Perseus wants to restore his hero myth. This he does by retracing its exact steps, or what he calls the "pattern": "the archetypal pattern for heroic adventure" (*Chimera*, 80). *Chimera* continuously makes reference to this mythic "pattern," its poetics, and its quest that develops throughout the exposition, climax, and dénouement.

In "Bellerophoniad," the mythic pattern consumes the thoughts of Bellerophon as he attempts to recreate his hero myth. Like the murals in Perseid, the one to assist him is Polyeidus, the wise shape-shifter, who on some occasions, changes his shape into written pages for Bellerophon to read throughout his second quest. "Bellerophoniad" differs from the preceding mythic tale in that it combines the ancient hero myth and the new one with the criticism of both more clearly than any other tale in *Chimera*. It starts with Bellerophon saying:

> Thus begins, so help me Muse, the tidewater tale of twin Bellerophon, mythic hero, cousin to constellated Perseus: how he flew and reflew, Pegasus the winged horse; dealt double death to the three-part freak Chimera; twice loved, twice lost; twice aspired to, reached, and died to immortality -- in short, how he rode the heroic cycle and was recycled. Loosed at last from mortal speech, he turned into written words: Bellerophonic letters afloat between two worlds, forever betraying, in combinations and recombinations, the man they forever represent. (*Ibid.*, 138)

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As it is in the Greek literary tradition, the story starts with the invocation of the Muse. However, it proceeds to exposing itself as a second version of the ancient myth, and it summarizes the story before it actually begins. At the end of this quotation, Bellerophon makes reference to how his new mythic journey ends. To avoid death, he agrees on becoming immortal yet in the shape of his own story. To a large extent, this resolves his dilemma. Aspiring to be a hero forever, he becomes the story of his heroism that he tells and retells all through his infinite years— a never-ending literary practice.

The "two worlds" (refer to the above quotation) become those of the new myth (the story of how he wants to retrace his old story) and the world in which he tells this new myth infinitely. Thus, tension takes hold of the text throughout the shifts between these worlds. Another aspect of the "Bellerophoniad" that enhances this tension is intertextuality: an aesthetic technique many postmodern writers use to integrate in their works some original quotations from others texts. One example is the letters that Polyeidus turns into that present a number of correspondences between Napoleon and King George III, and which indicate historical events. Also, there are allusions to historical figures like "Antoninus Liberalis," "Homer," "Ovid," "Plutarch," "Robert Graves," and "Edith Hamilton" (*Chimera*, 237).

By inserting the historical along with the mythic, Barth is putting them on the same level, for "reality or history are provisional: no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures" (Waugh, 7). In this sense, no hierarchy separates history and reality from myth and story. This thought manifests itself as the one binding all parts of the *Chimera* together. It is present in Bellerophon's speech when he says that "Art is as natural an artifice as Nature; the truth of fiction is that Fact is fantasy;

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the made-up story is a model of the world" (*Chimera*, 246). Barth has used myth for this purpose because

> *myths themselves are among other things poetic distillations of our ordinary psychic experience and therefore point always to daily reality, to write realistic fictions which point always to mythic archetypes is in my opinion to take the wrong end of the mythopoeic stick, however meritorious such fiction may be in other respects. Better to address the archetypes directly.* (*Chimera*, 199)

By employing metafictional aesthetic tools like the author-character, parody, allusions, intertextuality, the breakdown of time and space, self-reflexive imagery, and the Chinese-box structure, Barth re-creates the old myths of Perseus and Bellerophon and the story of *Nights*. Like the mythic Chimera, the novel in its three different parts represents fictional constructs that are aesthetically exposed as such. As it shifts between aspects of reality and fantasy, it becomes clear to the reader that the fantastic world of *Chimera*, with its fluctuating frames, not only offers a new deconstructive, aesthetic approach to art and fiction, but one that also encompasses reality and how we experience it.

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Chapter Three
Dream and Vision-based Fantastic: Power's *The Grass Dancer*

Power's *The Grass Dancer* revolves around four Native American generations of the Sioux inhabiting the Standing Rock Dakota Reservation between the years 1864-1982. Through distorted chronology and multiple narrations, the novel presents the struggles of a number of Native-American characters. These include Harley Wind Soldier, his grandmother Margaret Many Wounds, his mother Lydia and aunt Evelyn; Anna Thunder (also named Mercury), her ancestor Red Dress, her daughter Crystal, and her granddaughter Charlene as well as the tribe's spiritual advisor, Herod Small War.

The novel illustrates a society of intricate relations and its action revolves around conflicts between different generations. The novel also deals with inner conflicts that disturb the spiritual peace of its characters. For instance, the reader sees how Harley, who is staggered by the loss of both father and brother in a car accident, loses all sense of purpose when the girl he loves dies. Anna Thunder with her blind jealousy uses black magic to destroy her antagonists. Lydia vows silence when she loses her husband. As for Red Dress, who dies in 1864 while in a secret mission in the colony of Fort Laramie, she is unable to cross-over to the world of spirits and so remains in this world guiding the Dakota characters. At the same time, the narrative of *The Grass Dancer* embodies elements that function on historical, traditional, and spiritual levels.

Where the historical level is concerned, the novel harps on the ongoing conflict between the indigenous people, namely the Dakota Indians, and the White Americans by making reference to real historical events. One example is the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1874 between the Sioux and the Cheyenne on the one hand and the Seventh Cavalry

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Regiment of the United States army, led by General George A. Custer, on the other. It also mentions the role Native Americans played in the Second World War. On another level, the novel depicts ceremonial traditions like gatherings at powwows, where people sing and dance in groups, and cleansing rituals. It also shows characters like Harley, Pumpkin, and Red Dress perform "the grass dance" that represents the act of stomping on grass. Traditionally, a grass-dancer "prepares the field for a powwow the old-time way, turning the grass over with his feet to flatten it down" (Power, 30). In addition, some characters assume traditional tribal roles like the medicine man, or the "Yuwipi man," "who is frequently consulted on spiritual matters" (*Ibid*., 38) and who conducts ceremonies to resolve them.

The final and most important level pertains to the Sioux's spirituality. Under this heading come the roaming spirits of dead ancestors, guiding voices, and graphic prophecies. To a large extent, these features present themselves to the individual through the medium of dreams and visions, and they are an integral part of the Dakota beliefs. In fact, for the characters in the novel, these dreams and visions function as sources of knowledge. What makes this possible is the Dakotas' "fantastic" conception of their world as naturally combining aspects of the physical and the spiritual, the marvelous and the mimetic, and the ordinary and extraordinary. Accordingly, the novel derives its spiritual elements from this nation's approach to reality. For this reason, *The Grass Dancer* is Power's way of representing the Sioux community and its historical, traditional, and spiritual features. This she does to show how the Dakotas define their reality and determine its workings.

In its depiction of the Dakota Indian culture, *The Grass Dancer* manifests social constructionism. In *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), Peter L. Berger and Thomas

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Luckmann set the foundation of this theory. They postulate that what people regard as actual reality, in any given society, is a social construct defined and continuously refined by its people. Therefore,

> The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these. . . [Also,] the sum total of 'what everybody knows' about a social world [is] an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth. (Berger and Luckmann, 20; 65)

A communal approach to reality does not gain authority overnight. It takes a long process of passing on values from one generation to another, and so it only becomes authentic when it is used long enough to become common knowledge "taken for granted." In this reality, people *institutionalize* what facilitates their communal living and preserves its stability. "Morals," "values," "beliefs," and "myths" undergo this process of institutionalization and they take their place in hierarchies or orders a society assigns to them. All of these aspects constitute what Berger and Luckmann call the "social stock of knowledge" that forms the basis of all social behavior.

Understanding everyday reality as a social construct that relies on what are collectively deemed to be valid sources of knowledge, helps us understand how objects are labeled "real" or "habitual" in any given society, and why this labeling differs from one society to another. As representative of the Dakotas' reality, *The Grass Dancer* reflects this "religious kinship-based culture" (Bucko, 71). It also shows what objects they define as "real" and "unreal."

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Within the context of *The Grass Dancer*, dreams and visions play an important role in the lives of the characters. By contrast, other societies have defined dreams and visions in a variety of ways. Those who view matters through Western knowledge and philosophy consider dreams personal fancies or figments of the imagination. They may go to the extent of relating them to unconscious fears or repressed desires as present in the theories of modern psychology. As for visions, they are either the property of mythology in their archetypal role as the container of prophecies, or they are used colloquially in what implies the way one sees the future. Such approaches to dreams and visions do not apply to the Dakota people. For them, they are "natural" or even "habitual" aspects of everyday life. In a sense, in the Native American view of reality, "dream and vision are synonymous" (Allen, 90). Consequently, those who experience them do not react to them in shock, disbelief, or dismissal, but rather in anticipation and complete submission.

Unlike native characters, those who are not fully acquainted with the Native American culture consider dreams and visions in *The Grass Dancer* as manifestations of the fantastic. The novel has not been given enough critical attention, especially in what relates to the fantastic as mode and form. Many of those who wrote about it defended the idiosyncratic culture it represents. However, they did not rely on the theory of social constructionism to explain the dynamism by which this social group operates and defines dreams and visions. The following analysis fills this gap by showing how Power, a Dakota Indian herself, heightens the role dreams and visions play in the novel as she charges them with spiritual, and sometimes historical, content. To achieve its purpose, the study first refers to the Dakotas' understanding of reality as present in the novel. Then, it examines how the novel presents different kinds and roles of dreams and visions, how the characters react to them, and how they heighten aspects of the Dakotas' culture.

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One way in which Power illustrates the Native Americans' notion of reality is by setting it in contrast to that of the non-Native. This she does by presenting the views of characters from outside the Dakotas' culture. A case in point is Jeannette McVay. A rich "white" girl from Pennsylvania, Jeanette comes to the Standing Rock Reservation to write a thesis "about death: dead culture, dead language, dead God . . . to record the funeral so to speak;" instead, she "found all this activity and vitality and living mythology" (Power, 150). The Dakotas' life attracts her and so she pursues the mentoring of Anna Thunder, a powerful Sioux old woman known for her use of black magic. During Jeannette's stay with Anna, Power continuously juxtaposes, sometimes in a clash, the two differing views of these two women. Upon their first encounter, this discrepancy in views shows. Jeannette says to Anna:

> I was told such stories—they were legends really, but alive and moving upon this earth. I absorbed the tales, marveled that you were nothing else than Aphrodite, Goddess of Desire, with her magic girdle that helped her spell the other deities and mortal men. But think how wonderful this is, because you're not in some book or reclining on Mount Olympus. You're right here in the kitchen serving me peaches! . . . I want to get to know you, understand you, [and] see you in action. You are modern magic and miracles I was raised to think were passé. (*Ibid.*, 151)

For Jeanette, Anna is an exotic being and a living myth. Her view of reality sets the supernatural in the realm of ancient mythology, and so Anna becomes "Aphrodite" who bewitches men and deities alike. Though Jeannette has always thought of myth as unreal, she assumes that living with Anna will help her finally see "modern magic and miracles."

As she listens to Jeannette, Anna finds herself attracted to how the former amplifies her image and traits. Nonetheless, she tells herself that

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> I was no Aphrodite, Goddess of Desire, and I never wore a griddle in my whole life . . . I was fifty-one years old, and my face was pleated by early disaster . . . [But] if I looked into a man I could lower a line so skillfully it would hook his heart . . . Medicine pulsed within me, shot through my veins, and I don't mean the kind a doctor pumps into the body. I didn't practice good medicine or bad medicine, or a weak magic summoned by poems; I simply had potent blood inherited from my grandmother's sister, Red Dress. (Power, 151)

The contrast between the two outlooks on reality becomes obvious. Anna does not view herself as an invincible goddess but rather as an old woman afflicted by disease. However, as she shifts from describing her physical state to boasting about her relationship with men, she perplexes the reader. He or she does not know how a woman with this description not only attracts men, but also has a collection of many lovers. Towards the end of her speech, it becomes clear that there is a supernatural reason behind this. Anna refrains from calling it magic, for that insults her power, and so she rather calls it "potent blood."

From that point on, the novel illustrates a constant clash between the views of Jeannette and those of Anna, for even when Jeannette finally sees "modern magic" in action, she fails to comprehend it. For instance, when Anna charms a man named Chester at the carnival and makes him play around like an acrobat, Jeannette hardly understands why people condemn Anna for this foolery rather than Chester who is "a grown man" (*Ibid*., 161). In another occasion, Anna uses her power to orchestrate an affair between Calvin Wind Soldier, Harley's father, and his wife's sister Evelyn. This she does by taking two pieces from each of Evelyn's and Calvin's bed sheet and sewing them into the other. The result of the affair is the conception of a child, which Anna vainly claims as the fruit of her

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doings. Jeannette reacts to this event with "pure fear" and shock causing Anna to drop her guard and cry in exasperation:

> I am not a bedtime story . . . I am not a dream . . . Remember Pennsylvania and your college in the East, and the buses, all the buses you took to get out here? . . . That's all a legend from the past, and here you are where things happen. It is so real now it is a nightmare, am I right? (Power, 168-9)

The Dakota Standing Rock Reservation is the place "where things happen" and not a place where Anna and her identity as a Sioux woman with "potent blood" and magical powers can be disregarded or dismissed as unreal. In a sense, the figure of Anna functions as one aspect of the Native American reality many people fail to understand, for she belongs to a supernatural and magical domain. By showing this clash between Anna and Jeannette, the novel gives a statement about the Dakotas' reality: this is how we see our world. It contains the natural and the supernatural and we believe in the possibility of both coexisting together. You can either take it as it is or, if failing to comprehend it, leave it with the least amount of prejudice.

In an interview on *The Grass Dancer* shortly after its release, Power defended the novel's world and its inclusion of magical elements. When asked about what she thinks of the critical reactions the novel stirred, she says that

> they talk about how my work is an example of magical realism and making references to writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I really feel that given the culture I was raised in, this is not magical realism; this is actual reality to me. It might not be another culture's reality but it is not a literary strategy for me. I'm really writing character's reality. It never offends me when critics characterize it that

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> way because I understand where that's coming from. It's their cultural interpretation. But I think it's a mislabeling. (Oslos)

In this sense, *The Grass Dancer* should be read in the context of Native American culture, for both its natural and supernatural aspects are perceived as "real" by its people. The preceding analysis examines how, like the portrayal of magic, Power's depiction of dreams and visions also heightens the interrelatedness between fantasy and reality. They are presented as "real" aspects in the Dakotas' everyday life. It is noteworthy that the novel places "dream" and "vision" on the same level of meaning since both may have the same content.

One type of visions that manifests itself as an important aspect of the Dakotas' society is the one prompted by the Yuwipi ceremonies. The Reservation's Yuwipi man, Herod Small Wars receives those who come to him for help. Through a ceremony, he summons spirits to come and guide him in a vision and so he "finds things, misplaced objects, [and] the answers to questions" through "spirit voices and . . . dead ancestors" (Power, 74, 90). Though what Herod does pertains mostly to the realm of the supernatural, his community venerates him. In the terminology of social constructionism, Herod plays a "social role" assigned to him in what fits his society's paradigmatic "division of labor." Since "A society's stock of knowledge is structured in terms of what is generally relevant: and what is relevant only to specific roles" (Berger and Luckmann, 77), this process of division ascribes to every social member a task that demands a role-specific knowledge. In other words, every member of a society has a role to fulfill and so should be totally aware and in possession of the knowledge this role requires.

In the Dakotas' culture, Herod's profession as the medicine man, who converses with the spirits and uses magic for good ends, demands a spiritual knowledge in the ways

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of prompting dreams and visions and understanding their meaning. This profession presents itself both as culturally authentic and highly necessary. One of its benefits is that it serves the community at large and restores its peace. For instance, when there is someone killing the reservation's dogs, Herod gathers people and conducts a ceremony in which the spirits come in the shape of a coyote, identify the culprit, and claim his life as compensation, ending by that the death-roll.

Even though Herod possesses special powers and communicates with the supernatural, he is as ordinary as any other Dakota Indian. The novel shows how this man suffers from old age and marital problems due to a rift between him and his wife, which is caused by many stale years of marriage. Amid this unstable state of affairs, his friend Archie consults him on a dream that features the "medicine hole," which is a historical allusion to an event happening after the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1874. His dream being heavily loaded with an important event of the Native American history, Herod immediately conducts a ceremony for the spirits to represent his friend's dream in a vision. As they appear to him,

> they spoke individually, at their own speed, so their voices overlapped and rippled in echoes . . . They showed me Archie' dream, spilled images across the black walls, and I recognized the vision as a moment in history—events that had taken place in the hot summer of 1877, a year after the Custer battle, the only difference being the identity of four young warriors who had played such a large part in the episode. The original warriors had been replaced by me, Archie Iron Necklace, my grandson, Frank, and his friend Harley . . . We were not alone but observed by soldiers who had been scouring the hills and grasslands for small hunting parties such as ours, their thoughts being on revenge. (Power, 82)

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Like all visions and dreams in the novel, this one is vivid with detailed content and sensory images. The message here speaks to Herod on a historical level. It tells the story of four warriors being followed by soldiers seeking "revenge," as Herod calls it, since the Battle of Little Big Horn resulted in the Americans' loss and the death of many soldiers. As the vision continues, it represents aspects of this historical event. In the original story, these four Natives find a hole to hide in and so evade getting killed by the soldiers. In Herod's version, he and his fellows incarnate these four men and so relive the events. The vision follows the original story line and so Herod and the others eventually find their way to the hole. At the end of it, the spirits call after Herod to find the real medicine hole without mentioning the hidden purpose behind such a quest.

Through this vision, Herod regains his inner peace and it momentously restores to him the liveliness and vigor of youthful warriors, yet he still has a mission to accomplish. In his search for the "medicine hole," he and his fellowmen find themselves compelled by rain to sleep in an abandoned, haunted house. The house belonged once to a "white" woman by the name Clara Miller, with whom Herod had an affair many years ago, and who died lonely and heart-broken. Once Herod reveals this secret to the reader, it becomes clear the chain of events that has placed Herod in his present state of agony. Herod had an affair with Clara and he left her without a word of goodbye. He has been taunted by that idea for the past years and that has affected and still affects his relationship with his wife. In this sense, this vision is the spirits' way of helping Herod fix his inner conflict. When the ghost of Clara appears to him, he asks for her forgiveness, and immediately he sees a procession of warriors' spirits:

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> They wore eagle feathers . . . but they were not painted for battle. All four watched me . . . "What about the medicine hole? Will I ever find it? The spirit warriors smiled, and one of them raised his hand, palm outward, it flashed like a mirror.
>
> *You are the medicine hole*, he said. (Power, 91)

Now, the purpose of this vision-driven quest unravels itself. The spirits only want to send Herod back to the source of his conflict. Interestingly enough, however, the spirits draw on history to achieve this purpose. This serves on a very important cultural level. For one thing, it substantiates the Native Americans' attachment to their history. For them, history is an important source of knowledge that builds on written and oral accounts. It constitutes an important aspect of their group collective psyche as it illustrates legends on heroism and peace. In Herod's case, he wants to be like the four fierce warriors who have been given a second chance in life. In his own way, Herod becomes a warrior when he restores spiritual peace to himself and his world as he mends a past mistake.

Along with traditional tales of battle and courage, this history indicates a bleak side of the Native American culture. It is a side that involves a long string of horrid events taking place since the early colonization of the continent. For this reason, the novel makes many references to the policies of segregation, Western education, and cultural brainwashing practiced on the oppressed natives. For instance, it describes how Charles Bad Holy MacLeod returns from the school in Carlisle "wearing a white man's suit with a high stretched collar . . . with twenty books and a head full of education . . . lonely and ignorant" (Power, 101). It tells of how Reverend Pyke kills Red Dress for fostering "demon intelligence" (*Ibid.*, 250). Also, it brings up a point in WWII when Japanese Americans, being affiliated with "the Enemy" (*Ibid.*, 105), were forced to stay in the reservations of Native Americans. In other words, history manifests itself as an important matter for the

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Sioux that constitutes an indispensable part of their everyday reality, and consequently, as in Herod's case, it affects their visions and dreams as well.

The question that still presents itself in the context of Herod's conflict and its resolution is why this whole process happens through the guidance of spirits and not any other source of knowledge. The reason lies in another concept of social constructionism known as "universe-maintenance." A complex notion on social behavior, it suggests that when a source of knowledge, called "symbolic universe," suffers from a distortion, it is in the authority of the social elite that control this domain to fix it (Berger and Luckmann, 106). For example, if a society's set of morals gets affected negatively, and is endangered to lose credibility, those who head it, like religious figures or sometimes political or social dignitaries, have to intervene and restore its order. In the Dakotas' spiritual universe, Herod displays an authorial knowledge in the field. He stands as an institution on his own and a valid source of knowledge. He is the only one people ask for advice, rely on to protect them from bad magic, and consult in cleansing ceremonies. In short, he has to remain available upon everyone's demand. His job requires a sound psychic state and spiritual balance so he can commune with the spirits. However, at one point in his life, he finds it difficult to control his spiritual instability and so the spirits intervene. Being the "elite" of the spiritual world, elder spirits guide him through a self-redeeming quest. Consequently, he restores his inner peace and his connection to his world, and so his spiritual role in his society resumes.

While Herod experiences visions as part of his social role, some characters experience visions and dreams in which the spirits assign them their roles. For instance, Ghost Horse dreams of thunderbirds, and thus he knows he has to become a "*heyo'ka*," a sacred clown. Dakotas believe that becoming a "*heyo'ka*" entails that Ghost Horse should do everything in reverse. Thus, he "did everything the opposite of the way it's usually done

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. . . [and] he said what he didn't mean," and those around him "understood that" (Power, 66).

Another character that experiences a similar role-assigning dream is Red Dress, whose story takes place in 1864. Her dream brings up a vivid image of the colony of Fort Laramie where she sees herself walking on a "dead white" ground and leaving behind her "a stunted patch of pale, dry grass, struggling to grow" (Power, 225). In her dream, Red Dress is the grass that will spread all over the ground of this colony. Not taking it lightly, she interprets the dream as the spirit's way of telling her that she has a mission to fulfill there, and so "[her] life, like Ghost Horse's, was altered . . . It was decided that I [Red Dress] would travel to Fort Laramie after the spring thaw" (*Ibid.*, 225). She says "was decided" because the tribe's elders gather and collectively decide that Red Dress goes to the fort as a "representative" of her people. The spirits' choice has fallen on her intentionally for her ability of speaking both Dakota and English fluently and her conversation skills as a bringer of peace, i.e., a diplomat. In this sense, she becomes the binding force between the two communities. Once in that foreign community, she fits in immediately. She gains the admiration of both women and men. However, the mission takes a different direction as the spirits compel Red Dress to start killing the officials of the colony, and so she gets killed in the process. Interestingly enough, her social role does not end with death, for she pays constant visitations to her people's dreams, speaking to them in both Dakota and English, and conveying to them peace messages.

In addition to these kinds of visions and dream, the novel depicts those that come before death. When Harley's grandmother, Margaret Many Wounds starts dying of illness, she sees people she has never met before sitting around her bed:

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> Margaret tried to sleep, but she heard scuffing feet and smothered giggles at the foot of her bed. She saw people crowding her bedroom. They were sitting on little wooden chairs, facing her bed, waiting like an audience. She started to ask them how they were, and caught herself just in time. It would be rude. Dakota hospitability required that she welcome all visitors.
>
> "Do you want me to tell you the story?" Margaret asked the dark figures. "It's been in my head for many days now." They all nodded. Margaret closed her eyes and pressed her hands together. She began to speak. (Power, 101)

As though she is in a confessional session, Margaret starts telling her story to this dumb audience. They come to her to help her voice out many hidden secrets. Without her knowing, her daughter Evelyn is standing outside listening to Margaret as she unravels the true identity of the father she has never known. The lack of this knowledge has troubled her since childhood. And so, hearing the story, Evelyn resolves her conflict as she finally knows her origin.

Like all the preceding visions, Margaret's also involves spirits. However, it works on a personal, rather than communal, level. It helps her cleanse herself completely before her death, and so when it is time for her spirit to go "she nodded and slipped into the water. It had been coursing around her bed for two days . . . splashing hot spray . . . But the water was cool now. She didn't need to breathe" (*Ibid.*, 110), and so she dies.

Another kind of dream that works on a personal level is the one that projects inner conflict, fear, and desire. Sometimes, these dreams recur continuously, affected by and affecting the individual's life. One character who experiences such dreams is Harley Wind Soldier. Harley being the central character, the novel begins by making reference to his recurring dream as follows:

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> When Harley saw his father, Calvin Wind Soldier, and his brother, Duane, in dreams, they were wearing crowns of glass. Drops of blood trickled down their foreheads, beaded on their black lashes, and slipped into the corners of their mouths. Four weeks before Harley was born, his father and his older brother were killed in a car accident. (Power, 13)

This dream implies Harley's longing for his father and brother. As they haunt his waking and sleeping dreams, it becomes clear that their death has hugely impacted Harley. In fact, he describes how his loss has formed a hole in him since childhood. This hole manifests itself as "a deep cavity Harley had internalized . . . When he drew pictures of himself with crayons, Harley always included the empty hole by drawing a black spot on his torso" (*Ibid*., 25). After the incident, Harley's mother has vowed not to utter a word ever again but only in song. As a result, Harley grows up longing for communication.

In the context of this dilemma, a question that presents itself is why Harley consumes himself with the thought of his dead family members, to the extent of living all his life with a hole in his chest, even though they have died before he was even born? The reason behind this lies in the way the Dakota Indians define the role of family. For them, family ranks highly for the individual. It provides for its members emotional support and serves their needs. For better results, the family should be united and complete. In Harley's case, his family misses two of its members, and for that he does not feel whole.

In a social context that relies so much on family and social bonds, the definition of "social identity" involves how the individual sees himself in relation to his social group, whether on the level of his family or community. Harley finds it impossible to make these connections as he lacks knowledge of his family and its heritage. When he knows of his famous warrior ancestor, Ghost Horse, through Herod Small Wars, he still fails to relate to

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his ancestry even after he poses like a "*heyo'ka*" for a number of days. All in all, one can say that Harley does not possess any valid, substantial knowledge of his own family history and social standing and so lacks any sense of his identity. When the girl he loves, Pumpkin, dies, he loses his sense of purpose altogether.

Other characters experiencing dreams reflective of emotional troubles are less affected by them than Harley. For instance, in her failure to understand her daughter Crystal and possess her being, Anna dreams of her "daughter's ear caught between her teeth . . . [As she] was beading her thoughts" (Power, 154). The conflict is resolved when Anna takes her granddaughter Charlene in compensation for her failed attempts with Crystal. In later events, the reader sees Crystal struggling with the loss of her daughter. In a recurring dream, she sees her mother and daughter Charlene together. Her daughter "stands with her back to" her mother (*Ibid*., 142) calling her grandmother "mama."

As Charlene grows up controlled by her grandmother, she falls in love with Harley and loses him for Pumpkin. Later on, after Pumpkin's death, Charlene starts having a dream in which

> she and Pumpkin were finalists in a spelling bee. They were both about ten years old and dressed in navy blue pleated jumpers . . . Pumpkin grinned, stretching her freckles and raised her heads to her sides. She opened her mouth to spell the simple word, but there was no sound . . . Pumpkin opened her mouth again, and a cluster of tiny black birds the size of thimbles fluttered from her . . . and smashed in waves. (*Ibid*., 53)

This dream reflects Charlene's fear of being the cause of Pumpkin's death. When she discovers that the cause of all her fears is her grandmother, she looks her mother up and eventually decides to go to her and leave the reservation forever. When the recurring dream

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comes again, it happens in the form of a vision, and the birds instead of dying enter Charlene's mouth and into her soul. The spirit of Pumpkin calls after her saying that it "*wasn't [her] fault . . . These things happen*" (*Ibid*., 280), putting an end to Charlene's fear and guilt. When eventually she unites with her mother, balance and peacefulness illuminate their lives henceforth.

These characters manage to resolve their conflicts on their own and so end their troubled dreams. In the case of Harley, the solution needs a communal effort. It demands the guidance of both dead and living people. And so, as the novel begins with his recurring dream, it ends with a cleansing vision. To set the right setting for this vision, Herod prepares a traditional ceremony where Harley, wrapped naked in a blanket, stands in "the vision pit" for four nights without food or water. Once there, Harley prays for the first time in his life, and so the vision comes. In it, the four warriors appear and take Harley to the medicine hole. There, he crawls inside it until he reaches "the counsel fire." In Dakota belief, it is the place where the spirits of the dead gather. There he meets his grandmother who reminds him of life's possibilities, his father who expresses his pride in him, his brother Duane who teases him lovingly, and his ancestor Ghost Horse who reminds him of his grand lineage. Going back to the pit, the roaming spirit of Red Dress comes and advises Harley "to be happy, because [she] know[s] what it is to be sad" (Power, 299), and so his vision puts an end to his past conflicts.

As Harley leaves the pit, "he heard the drum approaching, its pounding song supported by the voices of his community, which was ascending the hell to collect him" (*Ibid*., 299). Herod and Archie, his mother, and his friend come all to sing for him an "honor song." This "community," of both the living and the dead, comes to aid Harley

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structure his identity. Now that Harley understands himself and his world, he joins them in song, and takes his seat in this communal wholeness.

Through an overview of Power's use of dreams and visions in *The Grass Dancer*, the preceding analysis attempted to present how this fantastic model serves in this nation's reality. The Dakota characters revere the supernatural and rely on their spirituality in their daily life. They are fully aware of how the spirits guide them in their sleep and wakefulness through that medium, and how though supernatural, these visions coincide with physical reality. An outsider to this culture may remain in a state of hesitation all through the events. However, he or she must understand that the text presents a lively culture with its still-standing heritage, its spirituality and metaphysics, and in which the fantastic mode is "habitual" and "real."

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Conclusion

The aim of this study was to contribute to the recent, but still evolving, scholarship on the postmodern fantastic. It wanted to show how this fantastic can function as a form that operates through different models and as a mode that presents variable views on reality. In this sense, the fantastic functions as a multi-layered, eclectic mode/form which adds depth to the text, frees the imagination, and allows a wide range of meanings and interpretations.

In all of the four novels here, the fantastic combines aspects of the marvelous and the mimetic alike. Such a combination sometimes creates a sense of hesitation since the events fluctuates between the realm of fantasy and that of reality.

In *Earthsea*, the novel employs the fairytale features to create a world rich with human and cultural elements. First, it relies on aspects of the fairytale tradition like the unspecified time of narration, the hero's quest where he traces and conquers a villain, the use of magical figures like wizards and witches, and the presence of mythical beings like dragons. However, Le Guin modifies these features by setting the novel's events in an invented archipelago where variable social groups with different languages and ethnic characteristics live. She also changes the quest into one where Ged has to fight his own internal evil rather than an external one. Second, the novel exhibits a use of language that constructs and deconstructs meaning. It assets Le Guin's breaking down of binary opposites as she sets self and other, good and evil, dark and light, and other pairs on the same level of value. Language also supports the text's magical words and formulas and their ability to create illusions, prompt acts, and control objects. By using language as a free system of signification, Le Guin creates new signifiers without actual referents, frees signifiers from their signifieds, and uses them to create and/or recall presence. As a result the world of

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Earthsea manifests itself as a *language-made construct* whose role is to present Le Guin's view on reality as one that strives for a balance between seeming opposites.

In *Gold Dust*, the novel employs the archetypes revolving around the hero myth as they manifest themselves in Ukhayyad's unconscious. His perception of himself and his world rely on that myth. And so his father, wife, Dudu, and the draught become embodiments of archetypal evil. His unique camel functions as his only source of relief since it enforces his view of himself as a hero. The Mahri accompanies Ukhayyad on his fantastic journey of self-purification where he descends through hell only to drink from the river of paradise. The text gives an example of the ability of the psyche to control the individual and affect the way he sees reality. In this sense reality becomes a *psychological construct* where one's psyche plays an active role in the individual's perception of the world around him.

In *Chimera*, Barth approaches the hero myth differently. The novel exhibits a conscious and intentional use of myth as a fictional artifact that can be constructed and reconstructed continuously. The ancient myths of Perseus and Bellerophon and the story of Dunyazadiad are parodied and reworked with the use of aesthetic techniques like intertextuality, allusions, and the author as character. By creating a narrative that endlessly shifts from one story frame to another, Barth keeps his reader in an endless state of tension/hesitation as the novel goes back and forth between aspects of fantasy and those of reality. All though this literary manifesto, the novel as a metafictional work reflects a high level of self-reflexivity. It exposes fiction that was once considered a mirror of reality as an *aesthetic construct*. By doing so, the novel explores "the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Waugh, 2).

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Finally, *The Grass Dancer* presents the fantastic that relies on dreams and visions and its role in the Dakota Indians' collective view of reality. The novel shows how the Dakotas perceive their dreams and visions as naturally inclusive of supernatural elements and assertive of historical, traditional, and spiritual levels of meaning. Such an approach to these fantastic elements underscores a definition of reality as a *social construct*. In this sense, the reader should regard this society's view of dreams and visions as authentic aspects of reality that possess a social value and resolve internal and external conflicts. And so, this reader should avoid skepticism or disbelief when viewing the text's supernatural elements.

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أشكال التصوير العجائبيّ في روايات أورسولا لي غوين " ساحر ايرثسي" وجون بارت "كيميرا" وإبراهيم الكوني "التبر" وسوزان باور "راقص العشب"

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المشرفة
الأستاذة الدكتورة عايدة أزوقة

الملخص

هذي الرسالة تحلل كيف ان ما يسمى بالعجائبي كشكل أدبي و أسلوب تعبير يعرض مناهج متنوعة لفهم الواقع في اربع روايات مختلفة. وهي تظهر كيف ان التصوير العجائبي يخاطب العلاقة بين ما هو واقعي و ما هو عجيب من خلال ثلاثة من النماذج العجائبية وهي: الحكايات الخيالية والأساطير والأحلام والرؤى. في رواية **ساحر ايرثسي،** تنشيء الكاتبة لي جوين عالم موازي مبني على ملامح سحرية وواقعية. ما يدعم هذا العالم هو الاستعمال الاستدلالي (البنائي) للغة و الذي ينتج مدلولات جديدة تساهم في دعم خطاب الرواية ذو الطبيعة السحرية. ان رواية **ايرثسي** تكسر أيضا الثنائيات المتضادة مثل الخير و الشر كي تقدم عالم يعتمد التوازن فيه على وضع القيم التي تبدو متضادة الى جانب بعضها البعض وعلى نفس المستوى القيمي.

في رواية **التبر** تعمل أسطورة البطل على صعيد نفسي من خلال إظهار تأثيرها على إدراك الشخصية الرئيسية لعالمه الذي هو صحراء الطوارق. الذي يسمح بهذا التأثير هو وجود هذا الأسطورة كصور نموذجية في جزء من النفس الانسانية يسمى " اللاوعي الجماعي". وبهذا تؤثر أسطورة البطل على هذه الشخصية من خلال عرضها لنفسها على ملامح من عالمه, وهكذا يرى نفسة أكبر من عالمه ويعتبر أحداث حياته جزء من مغامرته البطولية. ينعكس الموقف الأسطوري في **كيميرا.** يقوم هذا النص المبني على الميتاتخييل (التخييل الشارح) بتصوير الشخصيات وهي تعيد بشكل واعي بناء قصصها الأسطورية القديمة. تبني الرواية على أطر روائية تتناوب في وصفها للعجيب وللواقعي. هذا يخدم صعيد جمالي لأنه يظهر العالم القصصي على أنه بناء قام بتشكيله عدد من التقنيات الفنية وكيف أنه يمكن تطبيق هذا الفهم على الواقع ومنهجية تشكيله.

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تقدم رواية **راقص العشب** مجتمع من السكان الأصليين الذي يجمع مفهومه للواقع عناصر خارقة للطبيعة, خصوصاً تلك التي تحويها الأحلام والرؤى. يقترح وصف الرواية للأمور الخارقة للطبيعة وهي تعيش يداً بيد مع ما هو طبيعي أن رؤية هذا الشعب للواقع ترى ما هو خارق وعجيب كممكن حصوله.

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